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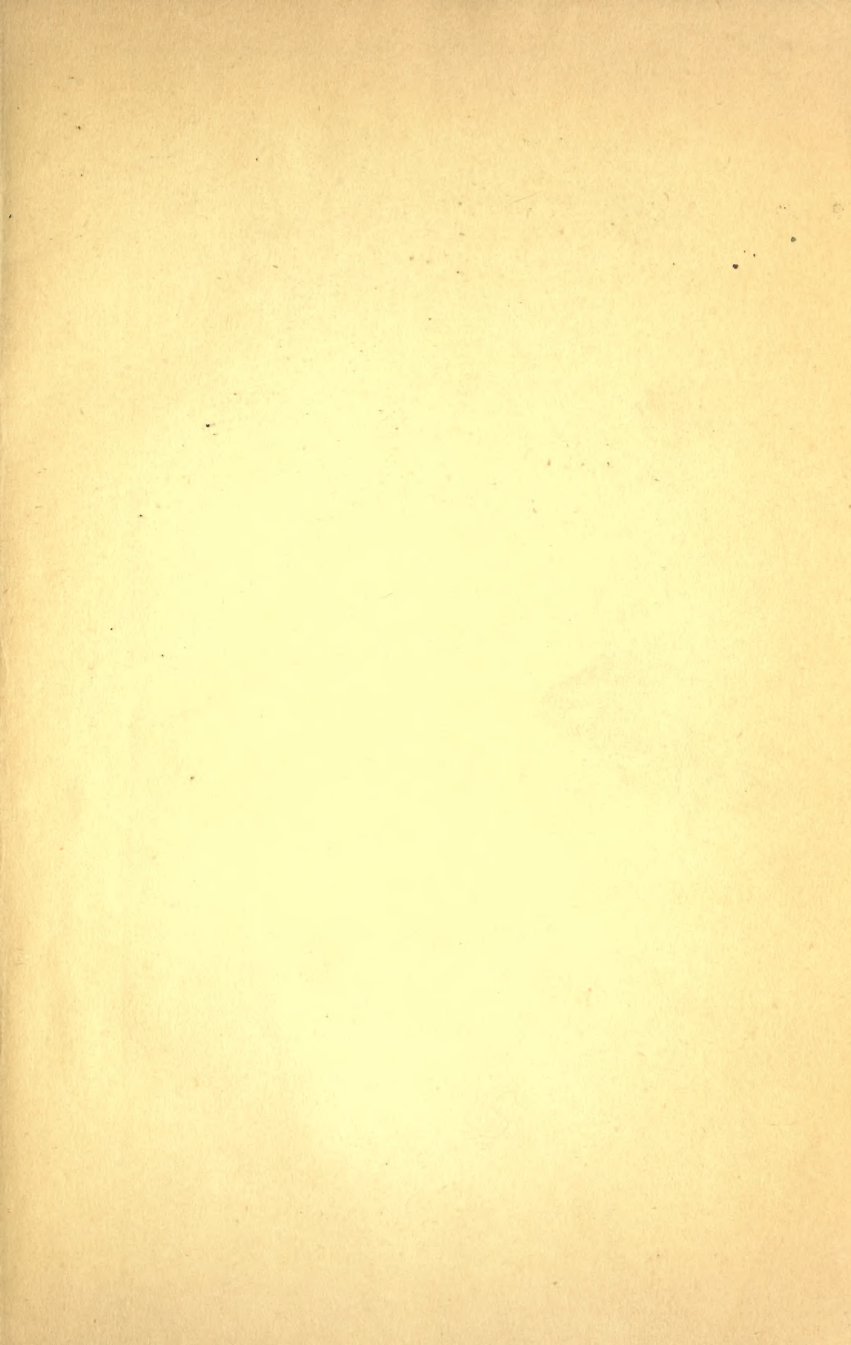
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THE HISTORY  
OF THE  
WESLEYAN METHODIST  
MISSIONARY SOCIETY





# THE HISTORY OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

BY  
G. G. FINDLAY, D.D.  
— AND —  
W. W. HOLDSWORTH, M.A., B.D.

IN FIVE VOLUMES

---

VOL. II.

---

‘Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God, who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.’—ST. PAUL.

‘I look upon all the world as my parish.’—JOHN WESLEY.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE second volume of this History is wholly devoted to missionary service in the West India Islands. It contains the record of a work as full of courage and devotion, as instinct with true romance, as any that we shall find in the several fields in which 'the people called Methodists' have given their contribution to the message of the Christian Church. If in these latter days this field has seemed to lack the attractiveness of its earlier days, and the joy of abundant harvest which once it knew, there is all the more need that the fascinating story of its past should be fully set forth. It is well known that the gifted scholar whose work is here given to the world so felt the charm of this field that he said that if he were beginning his ministry, and were called to choose a field of service, he would offer to serve in the West Indies. That charm remains ; and though dark and cloudy skies have gathered over this Mission Field, we cannot doubt that the seed sown with such unstinting hands and with hearts so lavish of their love will yet appear in a Church worthy of its history to the praise and glory of God.

The purpose of this Introduction, however, is not to add to what Dr. Findlay has so fully set forth, but rather to call the attention of the reader to the truly apostolic missionary who was the centre and spring of the wonderful service. John and Charles Wesley have so held the admiration and the reverence of their followers that there is no small danger of these forgetting the great gift given by God to the Church in Thomas Coke. Methodism is 'a fruitful vine ; its branches hang over the wall.' East and West, and in the distant South the Methodist fellowship is found to-day in large and vital Communion which still acknowledge the passion of missionary zeal. It should never be forgotten that it was in 1784, nearly thirty years before the Wesleyan Missionary Society was formed, that John Wesley informed Thomas Coke of his desire to send him as ordained Presbyterian to ordain Asbury for the service of the Methodist Church in America. That was only six years after



Coke's name appeared in the *Minutes of Conference*. Even then, before John Wesley made this suggestion, Coke was feeling the missionary impulse, and was corresponding with a gentleman in Bengal as to the possibility of beginning a Mission to Hindus. So early in the course of his ministry did he hear the call in obedience to which his whole life was thenceforth consecrated. The earlier history of Thomas Coke is well known, and we cannot attempt more than a bare outline here.

He was born at Brecon on October 9, 1747. His father was a doctor, who held a position of great influence in the town, and was several times its chief magistrate. His son passed from the grammar school of Brecon to Oxford as a Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College. He was not yet seventeen, and, under the bad influence of gay companions, he gave way in some measure to dissipation and infidelity. From these he was saved by the works of Bishop Sherlock and other great English divines. After taking his degree, he returned to Brecon in February, 1768, where he was chosen common councillor, and at the age of twenty-five became chief magistrate. Coke intended to take orders, and was led to expect a prebend in Worcester Cathedral. Nothing came of the promise, and he accepted a curacy at South Petherton, in Somersetshire. He was ordained deacon in 1770, priest in 1772, and took the degree of Doctor of Civil Law in 1775. Everything was in his favour, and it would have been safe to prophesy that he would attain an honourable position in the Established Church. His powerful and earnest preaching soon attracted attention, and the church at South Petherton was crowded to excess. He asked the vestry to build a gallery, and when they refused he built it entirely at his own expense. His parishioners now branded him as a 'Methodist,' though he did not yet know that despised people. At this critical moment he met one Thomas Maxfield, who was one of Wesley's first lay helpers, had been subsequently ordained as a clergyman, and was staying in the neighbourhood of South Petherton. A close friendship was formed between them. Maxfield became Coke's spiritual guide, and the impressions thus made were deepened by Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted*. While in the act of preaching in a cottage in his parish, the light came into Coke's soul, and he experienced the forgiveness of his sins. His ministry

received a new accession of power. Crowds flocked to hear the converted clergyman, and many were convinced of sin under his preaching. The rabble stirred up opposition, and were encouraged by some of the neighbouring clergy. The irregularities of the curate were privately admonished by the Bishop. A friend of the Wesleys, Mr. Brown, Rector of Portishead and Vicar of Kingston, lent Coke Fletcher's *Appeal and Checks to Antinomianism*. These works, as Coke afterwards bore witness, were 'the blessed means of bringing me among the despised people called Methodists, with whom I am determined to live and die.' Mr. Brown also lent him the *Journal and Sermons* of John Wesley.

The two men whom God was preparing for each other now met face to face. Wesley says, under date August 13, 1776: 'I preached at Taunton, and afterwards went with Mr. Brown to Kingston. The large, old parsonage is pleasantly situated close to the churchyard, just fit for a contemplative man. Here I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke, late a Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College, Oxford, who came twenty miles on purpose. I had much conversation with him, and a union then began which I trust shall never end.' Coke returned to his parish with new courage and devotion. His enemies could bear his faithful ministry no longer, and at length persuaded the Rector to dismiss his too-zealous curate. The mob had triumphed, and Coke was driven out of Petherton amid the ringing of the church bells, whilst the rabble were regaled with hogsheads of cider. The next two Sabbaths he preached in the open air. Hampers of stones were brought by the mob, but Coke escaped unhurt, and bade farewell to Petherton. On August 19, 1777, Wesley, who had been in Bristol the previous day, writes: 'I went forward to Taunton with Dr. Coke, who, being dismissed from his curacy, has bid adieu to his honourable name, and determined to cast in his lot with us.'

In the *Minutes of Conference* for 1778 the name of Thomas Coke first appears. This is the record:

Q. 7: How are the Preachers stationed this year?

London, John Pawson, Thomas Rankin, Thomas Tennant; Peter Jaco, Super.; John Wesley, Thomas Coke, John Abraham.

Wesley soon called Coke his 'right hand,' and found in him a trusted and faithful lieutenant. The 'Deed of Declaration,'

which gave legal status to the Conference, and invested it with power to carry on the work of Methodism after Wesley's death, was suggested by Coke. His zeal as an evangelist delighted the heart of the prince of evangelists. When he found that his young helper was unwilling to confine his labours to one congregation, he clasped his hands and said, 'Brother, go out, and preach the Gospel to all the world.' Never was a commission more truly carried out; henceforth Coke also looked on all the world as his parish.

Dr. Coke's first visit to America is described by Dr. Findlay in Volume I. The memorable circumstances under which he took up his great Mission to the West Indies will be found set forth in the pages which follow this Introduction, and little need be added to those descriptions. Room must, however, be found for two documents of historic importance. The former is a facsimile of the circular issued in January, 1784. This facsimile was taken from the original in the possession of Mr. S. D. Waddy, and was followed by a letter from Dr. Coke to 'The Rev. Mr. Fletcher at Madeley.' This was the earliest missionary appeal made by Dr. Coke, and it was made more than two years before Carey's great appeal so profoundly moved the Baptist Church.

#### A PLAN OF THE SOCIETY

##### FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF

##### MISSIONS AMONG THE HEATHENS

- I. **E**VERY Person who subscribes Two Guineas yearly, or more, is to be admitted a Member of the Society.
- II. A General Meeting of the Subscribers shall be held annually, on the last Tuesday in January.
- III. The first General Meeting shall be held on the last Tuesday in January, 1784, at No. 11, in West-street, near Seven Dials, London, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon.
- IV. At every General Meeting a Committee of Seven, or more, shall be chosen by the Majority of the Subscribers, to transact the Business of the Society for the ensuing Year.
- V. The General Meeting shall receive and examine the Accounts of the Committee for the preceding Year, of all Sums paid to the Use of the Society, of the Purposes to which the Whole, or any Part thereof, shall have been applied, and also the Report of all they have done, and the Advices they have received.
- VI. The Committee, or the Majority of them, shall have Power, First, To call in the Sums subscribed, or any Part thereof, and to receive all Collections, Legacies, or other voluntary Contributions. Secondly,

To agree with any they shall approve, who may offer to go abroad, either as Missionaries, or in any Civil Employment. Thirdly, To procure the best Instruction which can be obtained for such Persons, in the Language of the Country for which they are intended, before they go abroad. Fourthly, to provide for their Expences, in going and continuing abroad, and for their return Home, after such Time, and under such Circumstances, as may be thought most expedient. Fifthly, To print the Scriptures, or so much thereof, as the Funds of the Society may admit, for the Use of any Heathen Country. And, Sixthly, to do every other Act which to them may appear necessary, so far as the common Stock of the Society will allow, for carrying the Design of the Society into Execution.

VII. The Committee shall keep an Account of the Subscribers Names, and all Sums received for the Use of the Society, together with such Extracts of the Entries of their Proceedings and Advices, as may shew those who are concerned, all that has been done both at Home and Abroad ; which State[ment?] shall be signed by at least Three of the Committee.

VIII. The Committee for the New Year shall send a Copy of the Report for the past Year, to all the Members of the Society who were not present at the preceding General Meeting, and (free of Postage) to every Clergyman, Minister, or other Person, from whom any Collection, Legacy, or other Benefaction, shall have been received, within the Time concerning which the Report is made.

IX. The Committee, if they feel it necessary, shall have Power to choose a Secretary.

X. The Committee shall at no Time have any Claim on the Members of the Society, for any Sum which may exceed the common Stock of the Society.

N.B. Those who subscribe before the first General Meeting, and to whom it may not be convenient to attend, are desired to favour the General Meeting by Letter (according to the above Direction) with any important Remarks which may occur to them on the Business, that the Subscribers present may be assisted as far as possible, in settling the Rules of the Society to the Satisfaction of all concerned.

We have been already favoured with the Names of the following Subscribers, viz. :—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Dr. Coke, .. ..	2	2	0	Miss Eliza Johnson, of			
Rev. Mr. Simpson, Mac-	2	2	0	Bristol .. ..	2	2	0
clesfield .. ..				Mr. Barton, of the Isle			
Rev. Mr. Bickerstaff, of				of Wight, .. ..	2	2	0
Leicester, .. ..	2	2	0	Mr. Henry Brooke, of			
Mr. Rose, of Dorking,	2	2	0	Dublin, .. ..	2	2	0
Mr. Horton, of London,	2	2	0	Master and Miss Blash-			
Mr. Ryley, of ditto ..	2	2	0	ford, of do. .. ..	4	4	0
Mr. Riddidale, of ditto,	2	2	0	Mrs. Kirkover, of ditto	2	2	0
Mr. Jay, of ditto ..	2	2	0	Mr. Smith, Ruffia Mer-	5	5	0
Mr. Dewey, of ditto ..	2	2	0	chant, of London, ..			



	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Mr. Mandell, of Bath,	2	2	0	Mr. D'Olier, of Dublin	2	2	0
Mr. Jaques, of Walling-				Mrs. Smyth, of ditto,	2	2	0
ford, .. .. .	2	2	0	The Rev. Mr. Fletcher,			
Mr. Batting, of High				of Madeley, .. ..	2	2	0
Wickham .. .. .	2	2	0	Miss Salmon, .. ..	2	2	0
Mr. John Clarke, of New-				Mr. Houlton, of London,			
port, in the Isle of	2	2	0	an occasional Sub-	10	10	0
Wight .. .. .				scriber, .. .. .			
				Mrs. King, of Dublin,	2	2	0

## TO ALL THE REAL LOVERS OF MANKIND.

THE present Institution is so agreeable to the finest Feelings of Piety and Benevolence, that little need be added for its Recommendation. The Candid, of every Denomination, (even those who are entirely unconnected with the Methodists, and are determined to be) will acknowledge the amazing Change, which our Preaching has wrought upon the Ignorant and uncivilized at least throughout these Nations; and they will admit that the Spirit of a Missionary must be of the most zealous, the most devoted, and self-denying Kind: nor is any thing more required to constitute a Missionary for the Heathen Nations, than good Sense, Integrity, great Piety, and amazing Zeal. Men, possessing all these Qualifications in a high Degree, we have among us, and I doubt not but some of these will accept of the arduous Undertaking, not counting their Lives dear, if they may but promote the Kingdom of Christ, and the present and eternal Welfare of their Fellow Creatures: And we trust, nothing shall be wanting, as far as Time, Strength, and Abilities, will admit, to give the fullest and highest Satisfaction to the Promoters of the Plan, on the part of

Your devoted Servants,

THOMAS COKE,  
THOMAS PARKER.

Those who are willing to promote the Institution, are desired to send their Names, Places of Abode, and Sums subscribed, to the Rev. Dr. Coke, in London, or Thomas Parker, Esq. Barrister at Law, in York.

The second document is a reprint from the *Arminian Magazine* of 1792, in which appears a letter from Dr. Coke to Mr. Charles Grant, who writes from India in reply to a previous letter from Dr. Coke 'as to the conversion of the Gentoos to the faith of Christ.'

SOUTHAMPTON, January 25, 1786.

DEAR SIR,—I return you my sincere thanks for the pains you have taken in your kind favour, which I have lately received. The difficulties in the way of a Mission to Bengal are very great, but nothing is impossible with God. The hill-country you mention in the latter part of your letter seems abundantly the most eligible for the undertaking,



and probably will be our object as soon as we are able to make the attempt. But at present our openings in America, and the pressing invitations we have lately received from Nova Scotia, the West Indies, and the States, call for all the help we can possibly afford our brethren in that quarter of the world.

The high esteem which the Government has for Mr. Wesley I am well persuaded would procure for us the assistance which you think to be necessary. But Mr. Wesley himself seems to have a doubt whether that would be the most excellent way. In Great Britain, Ireland, and America, we have gone on what appears, at first sight at least, to be a more evangelical plan. Our Missionaries have not at all concerned themselves with applications to the civil power. They have been exact in their submission to all its laws, and laid themselves out in the most extensive manner for God.

We have thought that the plan on which the Danish and Moravian Missionaries have proceeded (whose piety, intentions, and ability we greatly admire), has no resemblance to that of the Apostles and their successors. In all the places which we hitherto have visited, we have gone to the highways and hedges to compel sinners to come in. In the public fields and streets we have proclaimed the Gospel in the midst of great persecutions, and sinners have frequently fallen down in a most wonderful manner under the word ; and I believe the majority of those in our Society do experience the assurance of faith. At the same time every prudential method which is consistent with a plan of extensive usefulness should be observed.

It appears very expedient that our Missionaries should visit the Settlements of the Danish Missionaries, and take every step they can to improve themselves in the language of the people to whom their labours would be chiefly directed. I have taken the liberty of sending a few of our books, by which you may more clearly see the whole of our doctrines, discipline, and economy. Mr. Wesley is of opinion that not less than half a dozen should be at first sent on such a Mission.

Somebody informed me that you have a little company or society of Christians, consisting of about sixteen or eighteen, at Moldai. The full confirmation of this would give me great pleasure. Who knows but you may be a little leaven to leaven a great lump ; the little hand rising out of the sea, that will in time water the whole land ?

As soon as the present extraordinary calls from America are answered, I trust we shall be able to turn our thoughts to Bengal. Nothing will be done without the maturest counsels, and I trust without some degree of Scriptural and rational persuasion, that God is on our side. . . . Your determination to give every support to the Missionaries your situation may enable you, if they show the true spirit and conduct of Missionaries, is most obliging. And if they were not to act in that spirit, I should myself heartily pray that they might be driven out of the country.

This letter is of importance as showing that even so early as 1784 not only was Dr. Coke planning a Mission to the East, but

also that Mr. Wesley shared those plans and modified them. There can be no doubt that this project of a Mission to India was in Dr. Coke's mind from first to last, and the pathos of his dying on his long contemplated voyage to that country is immeasurably increased by the fact. An incident related by the Rev. W. M. Harvard in his *Narrative of the Mission to Ceylon and India* (p. 52) is indicative of the hold which this Mission had upon the mind of Dr. Coke. Mr. Harvard says :

As we were travelling in a coach, upon some business relative to the Asiatic work, in one part of our conversation I presented a small paper for him to read, which was not altogether connected with that object. ' Brother,' said the doctor, ' I beg your pardon, but excuse me ; I am dead to all things but Asia ! '

This holy passion doubtless accounts for an incident in the life of Dr. Coke of which unfair use has been made. The Methodist Conference was reluctant from want of funds to take up missionary work in India, and in addition to this the East India Company, at that time practically absolute in its administration of affairs in India, was vehemently opposed to any attempt on the part of Christian Missionaries to preach to Hindus. Just then Dr. Coke heard that the Government had begun to entertain the project of establishing a Bishopric in India, and in obedience to an ungovernable impulse he sought the appointment of himself to that office. In a letter to William Wilberforce, in which Dr. Coke goes fully into his motives in so doing, he says :

My influence in the large Wesleyan Connexion, the introduction and superintendence of our Missions in different parts of the globe, and the wide sphere opened to me for the preaching of the Gospel to almost innumerable and attentive congregations, have opened to me a very extensive field for usefulness. And yet I could give up all for India. Could I but close my life in being the means of raising a spiritual Church in India, it would satisfy the utmost ambition of my soul here below.

And again in the same letter he says :

My prime motive was to be useful to the Europeans in India ; and my second, though not the least, was to introduce the Christian religion among the Hindus, by the preaching of the Gospel, and perhaps also by the establishment of Schools.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The whole incident is fully described by Etheridge in his *Life of the Rev. Thomas Coke*, pp. 368 ff.

It is easy to see how such an incident may be used to disparage the Missionary with so consuming a passion in his heart. But the true inference to be drawn is rather that Dr. Coke was prepared to give up all that he held dear if only he might fulfil the desire of his heart.

But it was not to be. His work lay in the West rather than in the East, and how that work was done will appear in the pages that follow.

We may well close this Introduction with the words of Stevens :

[Dr. Coke] had long entertained the idea of universal evangelization as the exponent characteristic of the Methodist movement. The influence of the movement on English Protestantism had tended to such a result, for in both England and America nearly all denominations had felt the power of the great revival not only during the days of Whitefield and Wesley, but ever since. Anglo-Saxon Christianity in both hemispheres had been quickened into new life, and had experienced a change amounting almost to a moral revolution. The magnificent apostolic idea of evangelization in all the earth, and till all the earth should be Christianized, had not only been restored as a practical conviction, but had become pervasive and dominant in the consciousness of the churches, and was manifestly thenceforward to shape the religious history of the Protestant world. The great fermentation of the mind of the civilized nations—the resurrection, as it may be called, of popular thought and power—contemporaneous in the civil and religious worlds, effected in the former by the American and French Revolutions, in the latter by the Methodist movement, seemed to presage a new history of the human race. And history is compelled to record, with the frankest admission of the defects of Thomas Coke, that no man, not excepting Wesley or Whitefield, more completely represented the religious significance of those eventful times.

## I

### BRITAIN'S SLAVE COLONIES

The West Indian Islands—Civil and Economic Life of the Islands built on a Basis of Slavery—Relations between Whites and Blacks—Slavery and the Gospel—Conditions after Emancipation.

TOWARDS the close of the eighteenth century the West Indies presented, with certain common dominating characteristics, a wonderful variety of features. It was full of social problems, and of political obstacles fixed in the path of the Missionaries of Christ. Under a professedly Christian government in every case, the islands were peopled by a debased heathen race of alien origin, toward whom their rulers admitted little moral obligation. The entire civil and economic life of the islands, under whatever government (with the single, and most discouraging, exception of Haiti after the French Revolution) was built on slavery. The habits of the people, high and low, were determined by this institution; it coloured their whole disposition and ways of thinking. All the commercial and propertied interests of the islands were engaged in the maintenance of slavery. Even religion, as in the case of the southern United States, was invoked for its defence. Refusing to lend itself to servitude, the aboriginal population had been swept out of existence and replaced by a million or more of African bondsmen, who were supplied in the first instance by the Portuguese traders, but latterly by English purveyors of flesh and blood. Pretence was made in the early times of this inhuman traffic of the benefits its victims would receive by introduction through captivity to the light of Christian truth. In Roman Catholic islands, it must be admitted, the priests put forth sustained efforts to instruct the Blacks; in the British colonies 'the Church of England existed solely for the convenience of the planters, and its clergymen,' with rare exceptions, 'acquiesced in the assumption that there was no spiritual part in the

Negroes to be attended to or developed.<sup>1</sup> The first body of persons of Protestant faith to show care for the souls of the slaves or to recognize in them a faculty for the knowledge of the true God were the despised Moravian Brethren. Had the English clergy been ever so bent on the people's salvation, their numbers were sadly inadequate. In Jamaica, at the beginning of last century, it was estimated that on the average each parish Minister had charge of 1,500 white and 15,000 black parishioners<sup>2</sup>; the seventeen parishes were counties in extent. In other islands the disproportion was sometimes equally great.

Enactments in protection of the slaves stood on the statute-books of the island legislatures; for the most part these remained a dead-letter. In Jamaica particularly it required the most atrocious cruelty toward the Negroes—as when a certain planter took to *burning* his worn-out slaves like other rubbish—to call forth public reprobation. The stoppage of the slave-trade in 1807 quickly doubled the market-price of human chattels in the West Indies, and induced in consequence a better care for their physical welfare; but the temper of the slave-holders grew more bitter as the movement for Abolition gained strength in England.

For generations [writes W. P. Livingstone], the subject population in Jamaica had been shut out from all ameliorative agencies, and formed a huge soulless mass in which all the forces of barbarism had free room to play and develop.

Naturally slaves in domestic service fared better than those employed on field work; but in the main the black people lived without mental instruction or moral oversight, herding together unmarried and with no decent worship, driven to labour in gangs under the whip, and exploited like beasts of burden<sup>3</sup>; the bodies of men and women alike were disposable at the will of their proprietors.

The existence at the present date of 170,000 coloured inhabitants of Jamaica, where the Blacks number 650,000 while the Whites have never exceeded 20,000, and where an

<sup>1</sup> Livingstone's *Black Jamaica*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> The appointment and discipline of the Jamaican clergy was at that period in the hands of the civil Governor as representing the Crown—a man too often quite unfit for the responsibility.

<sup>3</sup> The overseer of plantation-labour was known as 'the driver,' and commonly justified his name.



honourable union between the races has been rare, bears witness to the boundless sexual licence formerly prevailing.

The white people on estates [wrote Dallas, a friend of the planters, in 1803] have as many sable wives as they please ; and there are few properties in the West Indies in which families of Mulattoes have not been left by each succeeding overseer and bookkeeper. A father parts for life with his child, whom in its very birth he consigns to slavery, with as much indifference as with his old shoes !

This heartless profligacy, the concomitant of slave-holding, vitiated West Indian society in every rank, and bred all kinds of moral mischief. After such examples, continued for many generations, it is not surprising that to-day the illegitimate far outnumber the legitimate births in the West Indian Islands, that chastity is at a discount, and the foundations of moral welfare in a pure domestic life still, to a large extent, remain to be laid.

The indolence of the American Negro, like much of his in chastity, is the entail of slavery. Plantation labour was hateful to the freedmen ; to escape the sound of the driver's whip was their chief longing. In the eyes of many, the lowest subsistence as their own masters was preferable to the amplest wages ; regular hired service too much resembled the former serfdom, and the planters in many cases made the new conditions as like the old as they dared. With the abundance of wild land in Jamaica, an able-bodied Negro could easily secure a patch of garden-ground, on which a modicum of toil sufficed for winning a livelihood and, in some sort, rearing a family. Existence on such terms was like *heaven* to the men of the old slave-gangs, released from the sugar-mill and the overseer's lash.

In Barbados, where the density of population left no spare soil available for squatting, so that the freed slaves must needs work for the proprietors in order to live, they were content to be wage-earners. Kindlier feelings also were here traditional as between the races. A *modus vivendi* was established ; the former slaves agreed to continue their work, and the sugar-factories were kept going. The planters of Jamaica, on the other hand, ensured their failure by resentful ill-treatment of the liberated Blacks, embittering the apprenticeship which was designed to educate them for liberty, and grudging them, when full emancipation came, the lowest hire. They bullied

and defrauded the freed Negro, sometimes depriving him even of the poor amenities enjoyed in slavery. Thus they succeeded in verifying the predictions of ruin with which they had anticipated abolition. The majority of estate-owners and managers were as conservative in regard to machinery and methods of business as in their theory of labour—an obstinacy which contributed to their undoing. The estates, generally speaking, were loaded with mortgages, and the bulk of the money paid by the British Legislature in compensation for the loss of slave-property appears to have gone into the pockets of the mortgagees. The introduction of Free Trade in England, which took place twelve years after the Act of Emancipation, reduced the price of sugar by one-half, at the very moment when the colonial growers were struggling with the difficulties caused by the labour revolution. Under this second blow the industry collapsed, and estates went bankrupt, or were abandoned, in all directions.

There are, notwithstanding, witnesses to prove that where the Negroes were properly handled after emancipation, labour was always procurable; and that with improved appliances and efficient management, even at Free Trade prices and with the later handicap of foreign bounties on exportation, the West Indian sugar-grower was able to hold his own. On this point a recent observer in Jamaica remarks:

The primary cause of the unsatisfactory labour-market was the action of the planters themselves. . . . There is to-day little difficulty in obtaining plenty of labourers for the plantations. If he is fairly treated, the Negro makes at least as good a servant as he did in the days of slavery. . . . He is willing to work for any man who will treat him decently and pay him regularly and fairly.<sup>1</sup>

The economic fabric of the West Indies had been reared upon a false moral basis, and the failure of the great slave-estates, from which after seventy years they have not yet recovered, was a just nemesis. Even before Emancipation the sugar-planters were in chronic difficulties, crying out for more and

<sup>1</sup> *The West Indies Described*, by John Henderson, pp. 183-191; 'Commercial Jamaica.' This very competent writer describes the island as one of the finest fields open at the present time to a young Englishman of good health and good principle, with energy and adaptability, and in command of a moderate capital. J. A. Froude's verdict on the labour question, in his *Englishmen in the West Indies*, thirty years ago, was much the same as Henderson's. All competent overseers remark on the incapacity of the old W.I. planters, who, with land which grows anything the tropics will produce, were helpless when sugar failed them!

more 'protection.' Sugar is now displaced from its primacy in the list of Jamaican exports by bananas, conveyed to the New York and English markets by swift steam-boats; these and other kinds of fruit are profitably grown by the peasant cultivators as well as the great landowners. Slowly the West Indies are regaining, on a sounder and broader foundation, their commercial and industrial prosperity.

These colonies supply a complete example of the rise and fall of slavery within modern times—the sole instance of its continued operation under the direct rule of Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> They furnish material for a thorough study of the system in its moral, political, economic, and racial bearings. When Methodism reached the West Indies in the latter part of the eighteenth century, slavery was at the height of its power, both in the archipelago and on the continent adjoining. Out of the hundreds of thousands of Negroes held in bondage in the islands accessible to our Missionaries, a few here and there, through some exceptionally Christian white influence, had been touched by the Gospel. Scattered through the islands there were numbers of black and mulatto freedmen—persons who had won their freedom by special service done to their masters or had been allowed to earn it by payment, or whose fathers had thus succeeded—and these, breathing the atmosphere of liberty, were more or less emancipated from degrading superstition. To several of the islands, moreover, the Moravians had brought the living knowledge of Christ, and hundreds of slaves were gathered into their Communion. For all this, it was the melancholy fact that after a hundred years of service under British masters, the bulk of the black folk remained as truly heathen as though in darkest Africa; the gloom oppressing them was all the greater because the Christian light possessed by their taskmasters had become darkness! The fetishism and witchcraft of his African forefathers held tenacious roots in the American Negro's mind; they are not yet eradicated. At the time of which we are writing this was all he had, or had the chance of learning, in the way of religion; it suited his gross passions and the reign of fear and of caprice under which

<sup>1</sup> Had the southern States of North America remained subject to the British Crown, the question of Emancipation would inevitably have arisen in their case, and an earlier 'War of Secession' might have come about. The slavery found in Cape Colony at its annexation was of a milder type than that of America. Its abolition, effected simultaneously with West Indian Emancipation, was the beginning of the long struggle between Boer and Briton in South Africa.

his existence was commonly spent. According to the conventional European theory, the animalism of the black man's creed was good enough for the half-animal he was taken to be. The system of Obeah-worship combined with sorcery, which prevailed amongst the enslaved Negroes, was one of the crudest of the many forms of Animism ; imported from Africa, its ghastly character was aggravated by the terrible experiences of exile.<sup>1</sup>

For the slave the name of Christ was associated with fraud and bitter wrong. If the thought crossed his mind, he could have little wish to share his master's worship ; and where that master held his professed faith with conviction and felt kindly towards his dependants, he was apt to think of the higher religion as ' the children's bread ' that ' it is not meet to cast to the dogs ' ! When the first Missionaries sought leave to visit the slaves, they met with reluctance, and even hostility, on the part of many of the planters ; this was only overcome by the evidence that conversion improved the value of the slaves as servants, making them diligent and honest and disposed to work with goodwill. Enlightenment, it was feared, would breed discontent ; would implant in the serf ideas of freedom and of personal right incompatible with his station. Indeed, all attempts at the improvement of the Negro were deprecated, openly or secretly, by large numbers—in Jamaica, probably, by the majority—of the ruling class. Such apprehensions were the strongest evidence of the bad conscience which attends slavery, of its demoralizing effect upon the slavemaster. Through this inner reaction the institution came to be in point of practice, as well as in principle and theory, a worse thing in Christian lands than it had seemed under the ancient pagan civilization.

The spectacle which Haiti has afforded since 1795 of the intoxication of the new wine of liberty in the negro nature frightened the Whites of the other islands—especially those of neighbouring Jamaica—and deepened the misgivings felt respecting the missionary propaganda. Every fresh rising of the Negroes occasioned a new outburst of popular anger toward the Missionaries ; the local Legislatures, panic-stricken, adopted against them the most outrageous measures of repression. As the Anti-slavery agitation in England progressed, the

<sup>1</sup> C. Kingsley gives a striking account of the Obeah superstition and its accompaniments in *At Last*, Vol. II., pp. 133-148. The Obeah-wizard, or witch, was not seldom a *poisoner* as well.



colonists grew fiercer in their hostility toward the Wesleyan and the Baptist Churches and their agents, through whose faithful reports they knew the flame of indignation against that 'sum of all villainies' (as John Wesley had branded negro slavery) was being constantly fed in Great Britain.

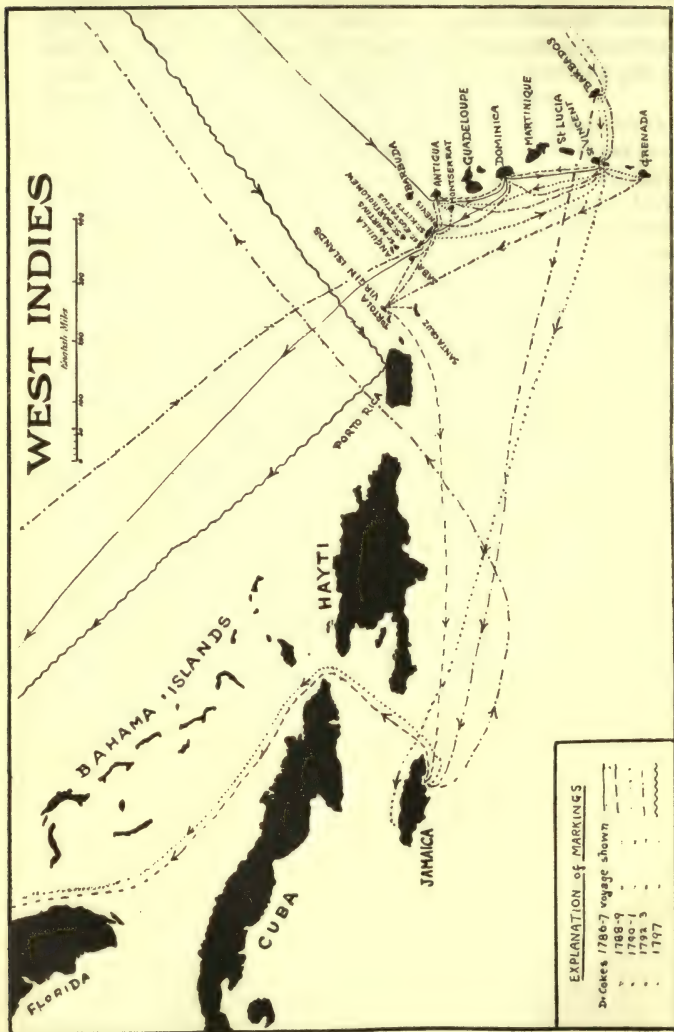
Certain it was that the Gospel of Christ had come to the West Indies for 'the opening of the prison-doors to them that were bound.' American slavery could not endure in the light of Christian truth and under the warmth of Christian love. Careful as the Missionaries almost invariably were to teach their slave-converts patience and strict obedience, and to avoid in their own speech and bearing all offence to the masters and all interference in civil questions, every forward step they took—every chapel or school they opened, every new Methodist Society they established in the West Indies—went to create an atmosphere fatal to the existing serfdom, and to undermine the foundation on which the wealth and power of the planters had been built up. Though Thomas Coke and his helpers attacked contemporary slavery hardly more than did the Apostle Paul that of his own age, they virtually pronounced its doom. In fifty years after their work began its fall ensued.

The Emancipation Act of 1833—a fruit of missionary toil and testimony—determined that the British Empire, and its industries in tropical lands, should rest on a basis of free and not servile labour. Slavery upon any shore where the British flag flew was declared to be intolerable and illegal—a treason against humanity. Its abolition throughout the civilized world was destined to follow that decree.



THE EAST INDIES





Missionary Journeys of Dr. Coke

## II

### THOMAS COKE'S WORK IN THE WEST INDIES

Coke's second Voyage to America—Arrival at Antigua—A Methodist Society in Antigua—A Congregation of 2,000—Wesley and Mr. Gilbert—The Moravians—John Baxter—Mrs. Gilbert—Arrival at Dominica—St. Vincent—St. Christopher—St. Eustatius and 'Black Harry'—Coke's Visit in 1788—Barbados—Tortola—Jamaica—Ten Missionaries appointed—The Third Voyage—Grenada—Second Visit to Jamaica—Relation of W.I. Missionaries to Dr. Coke.

ON Thomas Coke's second voyage to America, making for Halifax, in Nova Scotia, he was driven by a succession of storms to the port of St. John's, Antigua, where he landed on the morning of Christmas Day, 1786. Three young Preachers were his companions—John Clarke, William Hammet, and William Warrener—the two former designated for British North America, the last-named for Antigua, whither he was to have been forwarded from the northern colonies. Dr. Coke had no intention of seeking the islands at this time; from Nova Scotia he was to proceed to the United States on a promised round of visitation. His ship reached St. John's in an almost foundering state, unable to continue the voyage; and the train of circumstances forced upon him the recognition of a higher overruling Will. Work awaited him in the West Indies, to which he must forthwith address himself. Next spring the Methodist Episcopal Conference, which he was bound to attend, would meet at Baltimore; in ten weeks' time he must be on his way to this rendezvous. Meanwhile he laid himself out to serve the Gospel on the shores to which (as he expresses it) 'the friendly adverse winds of heaven' had driven him.

The hidden mark of Coke's diverted voyage became clear when the baffled ship-captain determined to make for *Antigua*, the one Methodist island of the West Indies. It was accentuated when, upon landing, he and his comrades, as they walked up

the street of St. John's, met the Methodist Preacher, John Baxter, on his way to early morning service. The astonishment of Baxter, and the warmth of the mutual greeting, may be imagined. 'After a little refreshment,' writes Coke, 'I went to our Chapel, and read prayers, preached, and administered the Sacrament.' Thrice he preached that day, and twice in the town every day for the ten days following, beside making several preaching excursions into the country. In the evenings the St. John's Chapel would be filled an hour before the appointed time.

Our Society in this island [he writes] is near 2,000; but the ladies and gentlemen of the town have so filled the house that the poor dear Negroes who built it have been almost shut out, except in the mornings; and yet they bear this not only with patience but joy.

Coke was delighted with what he saw and heard in Antigua. The island itself was a wonderfully refreshing sight, after the terrible experience of his voyage; and this was the first glimpse of tropical foliage and scenery for a highly impressionable man. He found the aspect of the negro Methodists surprisingly pleasant. 'One of the *cleanest* audiences I ever saw,' he says of his Christmas-morning congregation. 'All the women were dressed in white linen gowns, petticoats, handkerchiefs, and caps, and I did not see the least spot on any of them!' He had expected a very different style.

Antigua, the chief of the British Leeward Isles, contained the *élite* of West Indian society, and Dr. Coke's coming was an event for its white folk. Here was no ship's carpenter turned Preacher—good enough perhaps for the Blacks!—but a distinguished clergyman and Oxford Doctor of Law, an eloquent and fascinating little man. He received the most flattering attentions, being invited, amongst other hospitalities, to dine with Prince William Henry, Duke of Clarence (afterwards King William IV.), Admiral of the Fleet then lying off the island; before he left, a 'living' was offered him of £500 a year, if he would settle in Antigua as a parish Minister. 'God be praised!' he exclaims, '£500,000 a year would be to me a feather, when opposed to my usefulness in the Church of Christ.'

Here the five Preachers assembled held 'an infant Conference,' at which it was determined that Warrener should

remain in charge of the St. John's Society, while Baxter accompanied Coke and the other two Missionaries on a tour amongst the neighbouring islands. The Methodist work done in Antigua during the last twenty-six years had spread its influence widely, and overtures had come to Baxter from various quarters which it was incumbent on the Mission to meet. The men Coke had brought with him were required, as he soon perceived, in this needy and inviting field ; they must be detained in the West Indies, however much the other colonies might be disappointed. ' It would be an open resistance,' concludes Coke, ' to the clear providences of the Almighty, to remove any one of the Missionaries at present from this country.' This decision bore hardly upon Nova Scotia and Newfoundland ; but Coke felt it imposed upon him by the turn his voyage had taken, and by the ripening harvest spread before his eyes.

To account for the situation presented to Dr. Coke, and for the vantage-ground Methodist Missions had secured in Antigua, we must go back thirty years. In John Wesley's *Journal*, under date February 17, 1758, appears the following story :

I preached at Wandsworth. A gentleman come from America has again opened a door in this desolate spot. In the morning I preached in Mr. Gilbert's house. Two negro servants of his, and a mulatto, appear to be much awakened. Shall not His saving health be made known unto all nations ?

On November 29 of the same year we find the sequel to the former notice :

I rode to Wandsworth, and baptized two Negroes belonging to Mr. Gilbert, a gentleman lately come from Antigua. One of them is deeply convinced of sin ; the other rejoices in God her Saviour, and is the first African Christian I have known. But shall not our Lord, in due time, have these heathens also for His inheritance ?

The Mr. Gilbert named in the above extracts was the Honourable Nathaniel Gilbert, a lawyer, planter, and slave-owner resident in Antigua, and a gentleman of such estimation that he occupied the Speaker's chair in the island House of Assembly. Hearing John Wesley preach when visiting England, he was soundly converted to God ; he attached himself to the Methodist Society, and opened his house to Methodist worship.



His negro domestics came under the same gracious influence as affected their master. Remaining in England about two years, Gilbert became thoroughly grounded in Methodist experience and practice, and when he returned to his colonial home in 1760, he did not fail to let his light shine.<sup>1</sup> In default of other means of grace, he commenced religious meetings at his own house, to which he invited his neighbours, telling them of the spiritual treasures he had found, praying with them and reading Scripture, to which he added readings from Wesley's *Sermons*. Gradually Gilbert's addresses grew into sermons, and he found himself before long a regular lay Preacher, with a congregation which overflowed his largest room, capable of holding 200 people. In these ministrations, like Peter at the house of Cornelius, Gilbert was constrained to recognize that 'God had made no distinction, giving the like gift' of the Holy Spirit to Englishman and Negro; he was filled with pity for the benighted condition of the black people. While still in England, Mr. Gilbert had shown himself so much concerned for his fellow islanders that, as appears from a letter of John Fletcher's to Charles Wesley (dated March, 1759), he invited the former to accompany him to Antigua for the purpose of setting on foot a Mission there.<sup>2</sup> Now that the duty devolved upon himself, he offered the salvation he had found without reserve to the slaves of his own estate, and to those of neighbouring plantations where access was allowed him. As it commonly proves, a far greater success attended Gilbert's 'preaching the Gospel to the poor' than amongst his privileged fellow countrymen; within a few months he was able to report to Wesley a Methodist Society numbering several scores, chiefly of negro converts, which looked to him as its father in Christ. His wife was a nursing-mother to the women of the Society; his brother Francis Gilbert, a Cambridge medical graduate practising on the island, shared his spiritual labours. Quitting his legal practice, Nathaniel gave himself up to the work of the Gospel. The Gilberts were socially ostracized by the fashionable circles of Antigua on account of their

<sup>1</sup> The rise of Methodism in the West Indies nearly coincided in point of time with its beginnings in North America, and came about in the like spontaneous fashion.

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher was half persuaded to go. But he doubts his own competence, and wishes first 'to be certain that he is converted himself, before he leaves his converted brethren to convert heathens'! He indicates that, if his friend advised it, he might nevertheless make the trial.

religious zeal. Their attempt to uplift the slaves excited real alarm :

To gather whole congregations of Negroes and busy himself in disturbing their long-settled condition by chimerical schemes of improving them, was a misdemeanour which exposed those who committed it to a torrent of reproach.<sup>1</sup>

But their rank and connexions shielded them, and with them the cause they had espoused, from the active persecution with which Methodism was subsequently assailed in other parts of the West Indies. This exemption has continued in the case of Antigua—a circumstance due not to the Gilbert traditions alone, but also to the better tone of Antiguan society and the friendlier relations prevailing between White and Black.

For fourteen years, until death overtook him, with little help outside his own family, Nathaniel Gilbert carried on the work for God he had begun. At his departure the Methodist Society of Antigua numbered 200 souls. In 1773 Francis Gilbert sent to Wesley a glowing report, which he concluded by begging for a Missionary from home! 'So great is our success,' he declares, 'that at present almost the whole island seems stirred up to seek the Lord.' On his brother's death, however, Francis, whose health was unsatisfactory, retired to England, where he died in 1779; the Methodist flock was thus left without a shepherd.

Francis Gilbert's reference in the letter of 1773 to the awakening of 'almost the whole island' could not have been justified by the success of the Methodists alone. The Moravian Mission had now been planted in Antigua for twelve years, and was attended with signal blessing. Soon after Nathaniel Gilbert commenced preaching, the first Missionary of the *Unitas Fratrum* appeared—Samuel Isles by name—who from the first addressed himself to the spiritual needs of the Blacks; the colonial Governor, and several of the planters, encouraged his efforts. Before his death, in 1764, Isles had built a chapel and gathered a small Society. For five years the pastorship was vacant; but the little Moravian company, and Brown, its next Minister, saw wonderful success. The hurricane which devastated the island in 1772 occasioned a religious awakening amongst the Negroes, which brought a great accession to the

<sup>1</sup> Etheridge's *Life of Dr. Coke*, p. 166.

Moravian Church ; ' and there was everywhere a strong desire for religious instruction.' It was at this juncture that Francis Gilbert's appeal to John Wesley was penned. Shortly afterwards Nathaniel Gilbert died, and the Methodist work fell into abeyance, while the Moravian work was vigorously pursued. In 1775 the *Unitas* claimed over 2,000 adherents in Antigua ; they were said to be baptizing from ten to twenty persons a month. They erected a new and spacious church in St. John's, thus consolidating their position in the island. Dr. Coke, when he arrived, estimated that more than 5,000 Negroes—a sixth part of the entire population—were under the spiritual care of the Moravian Brethren,<sup>1</sup> ' many of whom, they had reason to believe, were soundly converted to God.' This gentle and humble people, who lived in harmony both with the Anglican clergy and Methodist Missionaries, left abundant room for other messengers of the Gospel ; Moravians and Methodists worked side by side in Antigua as brothers in Christ. The superiority in morals and intelligence which became marked in the Negroes of Antigua are largely owing to the success of the Moravian Missionaries among them. The planters of this island deserve credit for the support given by a good proportion of them to the Missionaries when such sympathy was rare.

The Methodist Society, though orphaned by Gilbert's death and his brother's departure in 1774, did not disappear. Its class-meeting structure held it together until reinforcements arrived. The chief instruments in its continuance were two women of humble position—Sophia Campbell, a Negress, and Mary Alley, a Mulatto<sup>2</sup>—who carried on the meetings in their own cottage,<sup>3</sup> leading the prayers of the company and giving simple exhortations. The power of the Spirit of God rested on this pair of steadfast confessors ; though reduced in numbers, the Methodist fellowship continued unbroken.

In 1778 help came to the solitary Methodist flock. A Local Preacher of Chatham named John Baxter, a shipwright in Government employ, was offered a vacant post in the shipyard at English Harbour, Antigua. He accepted with a view to

<sup>1</sup> The Moravians were found in other West Indian Islands besides ; but nowhere else did they flourish as in Antigua.

<sup>2</sup> Whether these two, or either of them, were identical with the servants of Mr. Gilbert whom John Wesley baptized in England sixteen years earlier does not appear.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately no Methodist chapel had been built at St. John's, Mr. Gilbert's mansion supplying sufficient room for the congregation and Society. The consequence was that when he died the Church was left unhoused.

serving the Gospel there. Baxter had been a member of Society for twelve years, and apparently knew something of the work of the Gilberts in Antigua; Wesley encouraged him in the enterprise. He found thirty Methodists remaining in Society at St. John's—a faithful praying people; when, on the first Sunday after his arrival, he preached in the town, four or five hundred people gathered to hear him. The flame kindled eighteen years before was ready to leap up again.

'Daddy Baxter' (as the Negroes affectionately called him) was amongst the most devoted and effective of Methodist lay pioneers, and peculiarly fitted for the task before him. He was a man of warm heart and rich evangelical experience, a plain, powerful Preacher, endowed, moreover, with good common sense and practical shrewdness—a lover of labour, systematic and indefatigable in everything he undertook. He was a superior workman in his trade, in favour with the public authorities and respected by the white residents. Without official credentials beyond Mr. Wesley's commendation, he was recognized as the successor to Nathaniel Gilbert in the Methodist Mission. A few years after arriving he married a lady of some property in the island—a woman of kindred spirit who proved a helpmate in his religious work—and thus acquired a settled home. He spent the Sundays and the evenings after his day's work in the shipyard in preaching and in pastoral labours, going to and fro from English Harbour to St. John's—a distance of twelve miles—and itinerating on horseback over the island. Though unsparing toward the prevalent vices, he suffered little hindrance, and was admitted to visit many of the plantations. After a year's labour he reports 600 Negroes as gathered in Society, many of whom, he says, 'come seven or ten miles barefooted to meet their Classes.' He 'finds himself in an enemy's country, where lust and appetite hold complete dominion over the general mass. . . . As to the men, it is the custom here to set no bounds to their passions.' He adds that 'it is difficult to keep free from censure, as men naturally judge that all are enslaved to the vices which they themselves indulge.' The sensual atmosphere of West Indian life, and the low level of European morals, has been the standing peril of this field.

Baxter's letter to Wesley, written three years later (dating June 10, 1782), shows that solid as well as rapid progress had



been secured. Some months before this a threatened attack by the French forces had excited great alarm; the enemy effected a landing at St. Kitts, but failed to seize Antigua, which as the seat of Government was a more vital position. The writer did not over-estimate the quality of his disciples, nor overlook the perils attaching to his success. He pleads for assistance, because the people for want of instruction 'run into many superstitions. . . . The work cannot be said to be deep in any way; but it is visible in multitudes. There is a great outward reformation among the Negroes, and a desire to be thought religious.'

Baxter now contemplated building a chapel for his people at St. John's. No private house would hold the multitudes who thronged to his preaching, and the heavy night-dews of the islands forbade open-air assemblies in the evening—the only time of day at which the Negroes generally could come to meeting. A further drawback is noted from which West Indian Methodism suffers to the present day—the lack of laymen of station competent for financial responsibility and the management of Church business. 'At present,' he laments, 'we have not one white man in the Society besides myself, so that I am at a loss how to find Trustees for our house' (namely, the preaching-house he was planning). 'As soon as this work is completed,' he adds, 'and we can maintain a Preacher, I hope some of our brethren will come to our assistance. . . . I still continue to travel into the country; though I find it hard to flesh and blood to work all day, and then ride ten miles at night to preach.'

By next year the projected chapel was in existence—a roomy building, in which three years later, Coke met a congregation of 2,000. How funds were raised for this great erection does not appear; Baxter's professional skill supplied plans and superintendence. Little help was forthcoming from England, the negro Methodists, mostly slaves, doubtless furnished the rougher labour required. A considerable sum in money must have been collected, with gifts in material, from the white inhabitants and property-owners, whose goodwill the Preacher's strenuous labours had secured, although he failed to enlist them in the Methodist ranks.

Two allies, however, came about this time to the aid of the solitary labourer, but for whose co-operation his work



must have been crippled. One of these was Mrs. Gilbert,<sup>1</sup> the widow of Francis Gilbert, a lady of superior intelligence and force of character, a correspondent of John Wesley's in England, who came out to Antigua upon family business and resided for some length of time in the island.

Had the estate [she writes to Wesley] regularly paid my annuity, I should have rested in my native clime, and quietly enjoyed those means of grace which I greatly prize. But God hath His way in the whirlwind. I did not know that He had anything for me to do in His vineyard, nor could suppose that He could use so mean an instrument. But my work was provided. Immediately on my arrival I was called on to supply those deficiencies which the secular affairs of Mr. Baxter rendered unavoidable.

Mrs. Gilbert undertook the meeting of the women's classes, and became a general instructor to the black people. The British at home, she tells Wesley,

can hardly conceive the hunger and thirst expressed by a poor Negro, when he has learnt that his soul is immortal and is under the operation of awakening influences. My house is open for all that will attend at family prayers every day ; and I have one evening in every week for the public reading of the Scriptures. These evenings I have large congregations both of Whites and Blacks. The novelty of such an institution brought at first many of the genteeler sort ; but I have reason to believe they are now impelled by a better motive.

This gifted Methodist woman had found her vocation under the pressure of necessity, and Wesley encouraged her timely efforts. She not only assisted Baxter in the care of the ignorant Blacks, but influenced besides a stratum of white society beyond his reach. Mrs. Gilbert seconded Baxter's request for the providing of a regular itinerant Preacher ; but Wesley and the Conference, whose resources had been taxed already for North America, had no Missionary to spare.

A second helper was, however, thrown by a singular train of providences on the shores of Antigua. This was an aged Irish Methodist from Waterford, who had emigrated for

<sup>1</sup> Her maiden name was Mary Welsh. She was born at St. Albans in 1733, and married Mr. Leadbetter at the age of seventeen. Her husband died in 1758, and next year she went with Nathaniel Gilbert and his wife to Antigua. She returned to England in 1762, and married Francis Gilbert in 1767. After his death in 1779 she had drawn an annuity from his estate in the island, and the interruption of payment occasioned her visit.

Virginia at the close of the Revolutionary War with his sons, who hoped to better their fortunes in a new country. Too poor to pay the passage-money, the family had indentured their labour to the captain of the vessel in which they sailed. Overtaken by storms, the half-wrecked ship was driven to the harbour of St. John's. Here the plight of the Waterford emigrants attracted compassionate attention. The old gentleman made himself known as a Methodist, and Mr. Baxter took up the case. A sum of money was raised sufficient to release the party from the bond under which they had sailed. Employment in the island was found for the sons; and the father, who was a clever, lively Irishman, full of Methodist zeal and simple piety, laid himself out to assist in visiting and instructing the Negroes. A serviceable Class-leader and Exhorter was thus provided for the needs of the Antigua Society, most of whose members were the merest babes in Christ.

With the aid of these two volunteer assistants Baxter's ministry continued to prosper. The value set upon his work both in England and America is evidenced by the fact that, along with William Black of Nova Scotia, John Baxter was appointed 'Elder'<sup>1</sup> at the famous Christmas Conference of 1784 at Baltimore. In accepting this office he left the shipyard, becoming 'separated unto the Gospel of God.' The step must have been taken under Wesley's sanction, if not by his specific direction, and approved by the vote of the American Conference. It seems to have been presumed, as in the parallel case of Nova Scotia and William Black,<sup>2</sup> that the work in the West Indies fell within the province of the newly constituted Methodist Episcopal Church. Along with John Baxter, Jeremiah Lambert, a man of good standing and repute in the American itinerancy, was ordained Elder for Antigua, but he died before setting out for that destination,<sup>3</sup> and no American was sent to replace him. Antigua was thrown back on England for support; and from 1790 onwards the

<sup>1</sup> Black came to the Baltimore Conference to seek ordination; Baxter would seem to have been elected *in absentia*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Vol. I., p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> Lambert's obituary records that he died of 'consumption.' Probably it was under this malady that he was designated for Antigua, with the hope of his restoration to health, when the disease suddenly took a fatal turn. Apart from the particular occasion of it, Lambert's appointment to Antigua is parallel to that of Garrettson for Nova Scotia.

West Indian Stations appear in the *Minutes of Conference* detached from the American Connexion, their Ministers without the title of 'Elder.' Had American Methodism been equal at that time to the burden, the West Indies might have belonged to it to this day !

Dr. Coke on his arrival found on the island, in town and country, an orderly Methodist Church of nearly 2,000 souls, which provided a solid basis for the extension of the Mission through the Lesser Antilles. In proof of 'the influence of the Gospel upon the lives of the Negroes' as he witnessed it, Coke relates that the proclamation of military law hitherto customary at Christmas-time, when the slaves enjoyed holidays which they had been used to spend in a kind of Saturnalia, was now found to be 'wholly unnecessary.'<sup>1</sup> Already the lump of Antiguan Negrodom was responsive to Christ's leaven. 'Riots and robberies,' adds Coke, 'have disappeared. . . . Turbulent lions were become peaceable lambs.'

That the work of Divine grace was not dependent on the popularity of a single man was evident on Baxter's removal to accompany Dr. Coke and to preach in other islands. The ministry of Warrener, who took his place, proved equally effective ; in two years the latter Missionary saw a thousand more added to the Society, 'so far as I can judge,' writes Coke, 'worthy members.' In Coke's opinion there were few places on earth where our Lord's commandment of mutual love amongst Christians was better kept than in Antigua at that time. The Mission had made a happy and characteristic beginning here. As in the North American colonies, so in the West Indies, Methodism originated as a self-sown plant ; for a quarter of a century it subsisted through the sole agency of lay Preachers and Class-leaders.

On January 5, 1787, Coke and Baxter set sail upon a round of explorations, accompanied by John Clarke and William Hammet, William Warrener remaining behind to fill Baxter's place. Antigua was a centre of colonial business, so that the Methodist work here accomplished had touched adjacent islands. 'In every place,' the Missioners found, 'the faith towards God' of the Antiguan converts had 'gone abroad.' The party called first at Dominica, where they sought out a

<sup>1</sup> This reformation was due, we apprehend, to the work of the Moravians and the Methodists together.

planter named Burn, to whom the captain of their ship had recommended them. This gentleman welcomed his visitors and encouraged the settlement of a Missionary in the island. At his house the travellers met with a couple of aged Negroes who had heard the Gospel formerly in the Moravian Chapel of St. John's, and were overjoyed to think that the message was coming to Dominica. Reaching the old French capital, Roseau, on Sunday the 7th, the Preachers came upon 'a mulatto gentlewoman,' Mrs. Webley, who gladly opened her dwelling to them. This lady had been a hearer of Mr. Baxter's in Antigua, where she formerly resided, and had believed unto salvation; she was the liberal hostess of Methodism in Dominica for many years to come. Her house was filled to overflowing when Dr. Coke preached there in the afternoon. A couple of old Methodist soldiers from Ireland presented themselves to the Missionaries calling at the barracks, who echoed the invitations already given, and promised their best assistance. Dr. Coke pledged himself to supply a Missionary to Dominica as soon as the man and means were available.

From Dominica the schooner sailed on January 9 for St. Vincent, an island far south amongst the Windwards, where its passengers landed at Kingstown.<sup>1</sup> Here a Mr. and Mrs. Claxton, who had been brought to the knowledge of God through Nathaniel Gilbert, entertained the travellers and provided a preaching-place, in which on the evening of their arrival a large company assembled. A wealthy planter living ten miles inland, a relative of Mrs. Baxter's, invited the party to his house, collected a congregation in his parlour, and entered cordially into Coke's plans for evangelizing the Negroes. Other plantations in the neighbourhood, he was assured, would be open to Methodist preaching. Meanwhile Claxton fitted up a warehouse to serve as chapel and residence for one of the young Preachers, whom he proposed that Coke should leave in the island. The position was seconded by a gentleman, in his early days a member of Wesley's Society in London, who had risen to affluence in the colony. Six or seven pious soldiers were found amongst the garrison—one of them a former Exhorter. Both in town and country invitations were multiplied to embarrassment. Dr. Coke waited on the British Governor of the island, who showed

<sup>1</sup> So spelt in distinction from *Kingston*, in Jamaica.



himself friendly. There was the prospect of setting on foot an immediate and extensive work for God. It was decided to station John Clarke here to establish a Society and preach throughout the island ; in regard to St. Vincent, says Coke, ' the will of God was as clear as if written with a sunbeam ! ' The promise held out was not deceptive, although a fierce reaction followed this too flattering reception. St. Vincent was the second island of the West Indies to receive a Methodist Missionary ; it occupied a place of chief importance, next to Antigua, in the progress of the work. When the division in the field came about, St. Vincent was made the head of the Windward Islands District.

Six days were thus spent at St. Vincent. On January 12, the ship headed for the north and brought its passengers back to Dominica, where they stayed for a night on the way to St. Christopher, landing here on the 16th. News of the tour had reached St. Kitts from not far distant Antigua, and a hearty reception awaited them. In the *Missionary Notices* for June, 1843, the story of the coming of Methodism to St. Christopher is thus told :

Frances Turner was converted to God under the preaching of Nathaniel Gilbert [in Antigua]. A lady, admiring the way in which she ordered her household, asked that one of her servants might be allowed to live with her for a time, so that she might be taught the ways of Christian people. . . . The servant's name was Lydia ; while here she found peace through believing. She married a coloured man (of the name of Seaton), and they removed to St. Kitts. Here she began to speak to others of the Saviour ; and, after some years, through the exertions of a coloured gentleman (Mr. Cable), the editor of the (St. Kitts) paper, who lived in the house of Lydia, Dr. Coke was appealed to to send them a Missionary.

Amongst the little company thus prepared for the messengers of Christ in Basseterre (the principal town of the island) Dr. Coke names with gratitude a Mr. Bertrie, a jeweller by trade. The townspeople were already expectant, and ' a considerable congregation ' was mustered on the evening of Coke's arrival. He noted the reverence and close attention of his audience, and was persuaded that ' the inhabitants were ripe for the Gospel.'<sup>1</sup> For the Sunday's preaching the Doctor was offered

<sup>1</sup> Coke describes ' the inhabitants of St. Christopher ' as distinguished from those of other islands by ' the urbanity of their manners and the amenity of their dispositions.' He attributes this refinement to the blending of French with English elements in their constitution.



the use of the Basseterre Court-house. Hammet spoke in the afternoon ; Coke at night, when ' a prodigious crowd ' gathered for worship, and the power of God was upon them. ' Six or seven of the principal gentlemen of the town,' including the parish clergyman, invited the Preachers to their houses. Elsewhere in the island a similar welcome was given. At St. Christopher the servants of Christ had the most auspicious ' entering in ' of the whole tour. This was surely the right place for William Hammet, the last remaining of Coke's adjutants. A house was rented for him forthwith by the friends of Methodism. For its size, St. Kitts proved a field equally fruitful with St. Vincent. Within a year or two of the Methodists' coming, a band of Moravian Brethren settled on the island. These won similar success, the two Missions co-operating fraternally.

From St. Christopher Coke and Baxter took an excursion to Nevis, within sight of the former isle to the south-east. Their letters of introduction procured for the Missionaries civility from the Nevis gentlemen on whom they waited—but nothing more! ' No access to the Negroes could be obtained ' ; Nevis confronted the Mission with a closed door. ' We had undertaken,' writes Coke, ' a useless and expensive journey.' The repulse was surprising, because the planters of Nevis had a reputation for liberality toward their slaves. On the next visit the door was wide open.

On January 24 Coke crossed over to the Dutch island of St. Eustatius, which lies north-west of St. Kitts, on the opposite shore to Nevis. A signal work of grace was reported from this foreign island. A negro slave known as ' Black Harry,' converted to God under Methodist influence in North America some years before, was living in St. Eustatius. Harry was a man of natural eloquence, irrepressible zeal, and consistent piety. Grieved at the wickedness prevalent in his new surroundings, he broke out in public testimony, with such effect upon his fellow Negroes that many white people, including the Governor of the island, went to hear him. Governor Rennels saw no harm in what he heard, and sanctioned Harry's preaching. But the black Methodist's appeals wrought upon the slaves,<sup>1</sup> and won for him so powerful

<sup>1</sup> The poor slaves,' says Coke, ' were so affected under the word that many of them fell down as if they were dead, and some of them remained in a stupor for four hours.' The Whites regarded these manifestations as symptoms of religious mania.

an influence that, although nothing seditious was alleged in the matter of them, the planters took alarm ; they persuaded the Governor that the movement was dangerous. Harry, who had by this time formed a Methodist Class of twenty members, was forbidden under severe penalties to preach any more. Dr. Coke arrived on the day after the order of prohibition—he was invited by a circle of free Blacks in sympathy with Harry's work. Presenting his credentials to the Dutch authorities, Coke asked permission to exercise his ministry.<sup>1</sup> On the following Sunday, by request, he preached before them privately. They raised no complaint against his doctrine, but in consequence of the existing agitation they refused to let him open his mouth in public. He met privately a large number of the seekers of salvation, and divided them into six Classes, three of these being placed under Harry's leadership.

After commending this infant Church to the grace of God, Dr. Coke sailed for Charleston, in South Carolina, on Saturday, February 10, 1787, having spent a fortnight on St. Eustatius. The work in this island and in Nevis (of which he had not abandoned hope), along with the St. Kitts Mission, he left to the direction of Hammet. Once entered on the path of persecution, Governor Rennels was driven continually farther. Prayer-meetings, as well as preachings, were forbidden amongst the slaves, and as Black Harry's tongue could not be tied, he was in the end sold and shipped back again to America. There Dr. Coke some years later found him busy as ever in his heavenly Master's work—and a freedman. The struggle with religious intolerance was prolonged in St. Eustatius, but ended in complete victory for Methodism.

In the space of seven weeks Dr. Coke had explored six important islands and brought the Mission into touch with all of them. In one of these Methodism was already flourishing when he arrived ; on two others he had organized Circuits, with the prospect of permanent and wide activity. He had planted on the ground three new Missionaries ; a fourth, the senior of the staff, had proved himself, by the fruitful labour of eight years past upon this ground, 'a workman needing not to be ashamed.' So the Methodist Church in the West Indies was founded ; and such was the report that Dr. Coke bore to the young Methodism of America, and to John Wesley

<sup>1</sup> English was the prevalent language in the Dutch West Indies.

and his own people in England when, a few months later, he returned home.

Thomas Coke's heart was now full of the West Indies. This Mission, like no other, was his own offspring ; he was not long in returning to see how his children fared. Making his second voyage to the Islands (the third to America) in autumn, 1788, he landed at Bridgetown, Barbados, on December 4.<sup>1</sup> He brought with him three Missionaries-designate, being sure of openings for their employment. These were Robert Gamble, Matthew Lumb, and Benjamin Pearce. In Bridgetown Coke knew no one ; and, finding his expenses at the inn heavy, he sent off Gamble and Lumb to his friends at St. Vincent, by a vessel sailing thither that evening. It occurred to Pearce, who remained with his leader, that a detachment of soldiers he had known formerly at Kinsale in Ireland were now stationed at Barbados, and that there had been Methodists among them. He went to inquire, and brought back shortly a couple of these men, who greeted Dr. Coke with enthusiasm. They had themselves attempted to speak for Christ in Bridgetown, and had been assisted by Mr. Button, a tradesman of the town who had fitted up a large room for their meetings. It turned out that this good man knew Dr. Coke, having heard him preach in Baltimore ; Coke had baptized at that time four of his negro servants. 'His house, his heart, his *all*,' writes the grateful little Doctor, 'seemed to be at our service. We discharged our bill at the inn, and found an asylum indeed with this our benevolent friend.'

Thus, beyond expectation, Christ's servant found his way prepared ; a nucleus of Methodism already existed in Bridgetown. On the day after landing, Coke preached in the evening in Button's room to a congregation of three hundred people, with as many standing at the door ; next night this experience was repeated, 'many listened with deep attention.' A letter of recommendation to a gentleman in the country procured a preaching-place there also, with access to the slaves on a couple of estates. The curate of Bridgetown parish declared his approval ; the master of the Free School put his large schoolroom at Dr. Coke's service ; the Postmaster-General introduced himself as an old and much indebted hearer of

<sup>1</sup> At this port most English vessels sailing to the West Indies or the Spanish Main made their first call. Bridgetown in the old days had been a great slave-market.

the Messrs. Wesley, who would be happy to assist their friends. Amongst Mr. Button's guests just then were three ladies, owners of a plantation in the country, 'who have, I trust' (writes Coke in his journal), 'received Divine impressions by our means'; these also desired the Missionary to visit their slaves. Coke's fervid eloquence and engaging manners carried the hearts of the Barbadians by storm; his successors found them less complacent! 'By a series of remarkable providences,' he relates, 'a wide door seems to have been opened to us in Barbados.' The island then 'contained about 20,000 Blacks, and from 25,000 to 30,000 Whites'—a proportion much more equal than elsewhere in the West Indies. It was soon decided that Barbados should have a Missionary, in the person of Benjamin Pearce. Pearce preached himself in on the following Sunday morning. After a week agreeably spent in this island Dr. Coke set sail for St. Vincent.

During the year 1788 John Baxter had removed from Antigua to St. Vincent to join Clarke, who was overtaxed by the work in the latter island. The enterprising Baxter had before Coke's arrival made an excursion to reconnoitre the Caribs located on the western side of St. Vincent—the remnant of the aborigines of the Lesser Antilles. Coke was already interested in this unhappy race; he set off on the morrow of his landing to seek them out, accompanied by Baxter, Clarke, and Gamble—the last-named one of the two companions sent on in advance from Barbados. They had for their guide Dr. Davidson, a physician living near the Caribs and a friendly student of their ways. Coke has supplied a lively and full account of this journey,<sup>1</sup> on which, he says, 'we were received with every appearance of gladness; and the planters treated us almost universally with hospitality, kindness, and respect.' He describes 'the simplicity and cheerfulness' manifested by the Caribs in spite of their 'cautious suspicions'; these misgivings speedily 'grew into an attachment which totally banished our fears.' Through Baxter's efforts a school-house had been built for the natives on the border of their territory, and a schoolmaster and mistress were domiciled there, whom Coke had dispatched from London earlier in the year. Personal inspection convinced him that this much-wronged people

<sup>1</sup> See his *History of the West Indies*, Vol. II., pp. 259–65. Both here and in the journal Dr. Coke gives a careful, detailed account of this extinct people.



were ready to be won for Christ, and he persuaded Mr. and Mrs. Baxter to undertake the experiment. The adventure proved a sad disappointment, but it was nobly enterprised. 'I feel myself much attached,' says the affectionate Coke, 'to those poor savages.' They were the first purely heathen folk he had met with; the encounter touched in him new springs of compassion. The tour in the Carib country finished, he sailed for Dominica on December 16, leaving Clarke and Gamble in charge of the St. Vincent Circuit. Matthew Lumb and Mr. and Mrs. Baxter accompanied Coke on shipboard, the two latter returning to Antigua to prepare for settling in the Carib country.

In Dominica, which the vessel did not reach till the 19th, Mrs. Webley was expecting the Mission party; with her friends she had hired a large room for preaching. The leaven infused two years before had not failed to work; Coke was able now 'to form a little Society of about twenty-four desiring souls,' some of them previously 'joined' in St. Kitts and Antigua. A colony of old French settlement and Romanist faith, situated between the two large French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique,<sup>1</sup> Dominica has always been difficult to evangelize, the island has, moreover, a melancholy health record. The success gained in Antigua or St. Vincent could not be expected here. But the Gospel had now won a footing at Roseau, and entrance to several inland plantations. Coke resolved to post one of his Missionaries in Dominica. William McCornock was the chosen man. An Irish Preacher of ten years' experience, in the *Minutes* of 1788 McCornock heads the list of 'Missionaries appointed to the West Indies,' his name being followed by those of Pearce, Lumb, Gamble, and Owens.<sup>2</sup> McCornock

began his labours with a zeal which plainly evinced that he had the interest of souls at heart. Multitudes flocked to hear him, and many received the word with joy. His preaching was owned of God in the awakening of many souls.

In making his arrangements for Dominica, Coke waited upon Governor Orde, the chief magistrate of the island, whom he

<sup>1</sup> Dominica was specially valued by the British Government of this period, and strongly fortified, as a *point d'appui* in naval conflict with France. The island had been ceded in the Versailles Treaty of 1783.

<sup>2</sup> The first and last named had probably crossed the Atlantic soon after Coke and his fellow-voyagers.



distinguishes as courteous and gracious beyond the wont of British authorities.

Antigua was the next mark of Dr. Coke's rapid voyage ; he landed, with Mr. and Mrs. Baxter, on Christmas Eve. Warrener's ministry there had been abundantly blessed ; 2,800 names were registered in the Methodist Class-books, while the Moravians counted a Church membership nearly as numerous—all this out of a population of 37,000, Black and White. ' So great a leaven,' Coke remarks, ' is not known, perhaps, in so small a country (elsewhere) throughout the world.'

Delay in Antigua would have been delightful ; but he hastened forward to St. Christopher, and landed at Basseterre on December 29. In this Circuit Coke had left William Hammet, who was made ' the instrument of one of the greatest works of God ' he ' had ever known in the circle of his labours.

. . . In two years he had raised, in an island barren of all religion at the commencement of his labours, a Society of 700 members,' a great part of them ' true members of Christ.' Most gratifying was the circumstance that ' two Preachers had been raised up ' here, who promised to be suitable for the West Indian ministry.

The last day of the year saw the restless traveller landed again in St. Eustatius, where the band of martyrs left behind in February, 1787, was in dire distress. Black Harry, their leader, had been publicly and cruelly whipped, then imprisoned, finally sold into banishment, because he could not forbear to speak his Saviour's praise. ' When he stood before the Governor and Council to answer for the unpardonable crime of praying with the people ' and was threatened with the lash, ' he calmly replied, " Christ was flogged, and why should not I ? " ' The Council of St. Eustatius, in seeking to suppress Methodism, issued the most egregious edict of religious persecution on record :

that if any white person should be found praying with his brethren, for the first offence he should be fined fifty pieces of eight ; for the second, one hundred pieces<sup>1</sup> ; and for the third he should be whipped, his goods confiscated, and he should then be banished the island. That if a coloured man should be found praying, for the first offence he should receive thirty-nine lashes ; and for the second, if free, he should be whipped and banished ; but if a slave, be whipped every time.

<sup>1</sup> The standard money currency of the period.

This persecution was unique in being, as Coke states, 'open and avowedly' directed 'against prayer. However,' he adds, 'we ventured to baptize about 140 of our Society.' He found 258 people in Church fellowship, 'under this heavy cross and hot persecution,' the majority of whom 'had tasted that the Lord is gracious.'

On New Year's Day Dr. Coke took ship for St. Kitts; but the incapacity of a drunken crew compelled him to put back to the port of departure. This mishap the brave little man took as a sign that God had more for him to do in St. Eustatius. So he hired a large room where next day he preached to a quiet congregation, advertising himself for the following Sunday. This was throwing down the gage to Governor Rennels, who forthwith sent for Coke's host and threatened him with 'terrible punishments.' A message followed, formally inhibiting Coke from preaching either publicly or privately, to Whites or Blacks, within the island, 'under the penalty, in default, of *arbitrary punishment*'! He was required to give his promise of abstinence. Seeing that further attempts would be stopped by physical force and would have painful consequences for his friends, he submitted and took his departure.

From St. Kitts the island of Nevis was visited once more. Where two years earlier Coke found nothing but indifference, many hands of welcome were now held out. 'A class of twenty-one catechumens' was formed; and meeting the general desire, Dr. Coke planted in Nevis Thomas Owens, the fifth of the young Missionaries put at his disposal by the last Conference. To shepherd the harried flock in St. Eustatius he sent an excellent Local Preacher of St. Kitts, who had volunteered for service. This was William Brazier, whose name was not included in the interdict served upon Dr. Coke.<sup>1</sup> But Governor Rennels, says Coke, 'soon found him out, and by his threatening dislodged him.' Brazier made his way thereupon to the little island of Saba<sup>2</sup> hard by, where the Dutch Governor stood his friend. When Coke, hearing of Brazier's reception, came over to Saba, the whole island,

<sup>1</sup> Hammet and Meredith (the other St. Kitts volunteers) shared Coke's proscription in St. Eustatius.

<sup>2</sup> Saba consists of a single volcanic rock, about 1,500 feet high. This little isolated community has borne a uniformly high character; see C. Kingsley's *At Last*, Vol. I., pp. 43, 44.

occupied by 1,000 Whites and twice as many Blacks, welcomed him. The people had been for seventeen years without the public offices of religion. The Governor made Dr. Coke his guest, and, supported by the Council, offered the empty church and parsonage for Mr. Brazier's use. Dr. Coke explained to them the Methodist system ; they fell in with his terms, and he was constrained to give up Brazier for Saba, though he had destined him for Jamaica. Unfortunately Governor Rennels of St. Eustatius, who controlled the affairs of Saba, cancelled the above arrangement on hearing of it, and ordered Brazier's expulsion. Methodism was afterwards restored in both islands.

On January 17, Coke and Hammet landed in Tortola, the chief of the British Virgin Islands. The messengers of Christ found their fame arrived before them :

This island [writes Coke], which contains about 1,000 Whites and 8,000 Blacks, is ripe for the Gospel. It seems to be the general cry of the Negroes, ' Let us have, if possible, a Methodist missionary ! '

After preaching twice in Tortola, Coke sailed for the important Danish island of Santa Cruz, which held 30,000 inhabitants, mostly English-speaking. Its capital he speaks of as ' far the most beautiful town I have ever seen in the Caribbean Islands.' Everything in Santa Cruz promised favourably ; the Governor, to whom Dr. Coke had been commended by a friend in London, gave his approval to the Mission. Coke decided to leave Hammet to labour for the present in the Virgin Islands, though he had marked him out for Jamaica. Amongst the Tortola Negroes the work of God spread in the early days more swiftly than anywhere else in the West Indies, over a thousand people being gathered into the Church within two years.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Coke sums up the result of his progress up to this point by the following entry in the journal :

We have now through the blessing of God on our endeavours a prospect of much good in *ten* of the islands, which unitedly contain about 250,000 inhabitants, near four-fifths of whom are covered with heathen darkness.

<sup>1</sup> The Tortola membership is entered in the *Minutes* of 1791 at the figure of 900, with this note : ' The return at the last Conference in the W.I. was 1,800, but the work has been of such short continuance, and the increase so rapid, that only half the number is set down.' Next year the number given is 1,200. By 1796 it has mounted up to 3,168, exceeding the membership of Antigua. Tortola became in fact a Methodist island.

Jamaica was the main objective of this voyage. Dr. Coke had been compelled, before arriving here, to give up both his assistants for other localities ; nevertheless he persevered in his plan, and landed on January 19 at Port Royal. His letters of commendation secured for him a good friend in Mr. Fishley, master of the shipyard, who introduced him to several like-minded people at Kingston, across the harbour. In a few days he was able to commence preaching. Small in the beginning, his congregations increased beyond the capacity of the private house first opened to him, when a kindly Roman Catholic procured for his use a large concert-room in Kingston, which on the second evening was crowded to overflowing. He counted 600 persons present, two-thirds of them White—the largest congregation of this colour he had addressed in the islands. Here he had a taste of the ruffianism which characterized the opposition of the dissipated white gentry to Methodist preaching in Jamaica for many years thereafter.

A company of gentlemen inflamed with liquor [he relates] interrupted the sermon with drunken shouts of ' Down with him, down with him ! ' They pressed through the crowd to reach the speaker, crying, ' Who seconds that fellow ? ' on which my new but gallant friend, Mr. Bull, stepped between the rioters and me, saying, ' I second him, against men and devils ! '

On this a lady in the congregation, a former London Methodist, stood up, and remonstrated with the rowdies until, confounded and sensible of the anger of the assembly, their whisky-courage failed them, and they retreated by the stair, still crying ' Down with him ! ' This attack won for Dr. Coke fresh sympathy, and he took his departure in a few days ' satisfied that much good might be done in this island if the Gospel were regularly preached here with power.'<sup>1</sup> He adds further, ' in honour of the island,' that he ' never visited any place in Europe or

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Coke's was not the first evangelical preaching in Kingston. As early as 1754 a Moravian party landed in Jamaica ; but their Mission, confining itself to an agricultural settlement formed in the western interior, though excellently conducted, never exerted a wide influence. In 1783 George Liele, a negro slave born in Virginia, came with his fugitive Royalist master to Kingston. Liele was a man of superior gifts and energetic Christian character, who had been called to the ministry by the Baptist Church, to which he belonged in his Native State, and had been manumitted there. He began to preach in his new home. Soon a congregation and Church gathered round him. Though much persecuted, he had baptized, by the end of 1791, 400 persons, and his Church numbered 450—all Negroes, and most of them slaves. Liele's movement spread beyond Kingston, and gave birth to a group of Baptist Churches of black constituency before the Baptist Missionary Society set foot on the island. See Underhill's *The West Indies* (1862), pp. 195-197.



America in which the Gospel was not preached, where he received so many civilities as he did in Jamaica.' The population of the island at that date was over 300,000.

Four fresh Circuits (not counting the Dutch islands)—Barbados, Dominica, Nevis, Tortola—had been added on the second tour to the four previously in existence; and a way had been opened for work in Jamaica. The former staff of four Missionaries had been raised to ten.<sup>1</sup> Coke was due at Charleston in February, and set sail for that place from Port Royal.

On November 22, 1790, Dr. Coke landed a second time at Barbados, completing his third voyage to the West Indies. He brought two new Missionaries, James Lyons and Thomas Worrell,<sup>2</sup> both from the ranks of the Irish ministry, Coke's chief recruiting-ground. At Bridgetown, since Coke's first coming, the white mob,<sup>3</sup> finding Methodism dangerous to its vices, had declared war; but Pearce, the Missionary, held his ground well, and was resolutely defended by an upright magistrate. 'A foundation for a great work has been laid here,' Coke records in his journal, 'though the Society is at present very small.'

Sending Lyons forward to St. Kitts and taking Worrell with him, Dr. Coke sailed next day for St. Vincent, where a sore disappointment awaited him. The Mission to the Caribs had totally failed. Although Mr. and Mrs. Baxter had learnt the language and laid themselves out unsparingly to win this unhappy people, they had been compelled to quit the native territory.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere in the island the work was prospering; at Kingstown the Methodists bought for their chapel a disused Roman Catholic church. Coke sees the prospect of a great

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Lumb, it appears, was stationed at Antigua, to assist Warrener, Baxter having removed to St. Vincent, for which Circuit his name stands in the Stations of 1790.

<sup>2</sup> Within two years both these men disappear from the Stations, Worrell by death, Lyons through unworthiness. The casualties, physical and moral, in the West Indian service during its first period were excessive. Of the ten Missionaries appointed by the British Conference under Dr. Coke's direction to date, four only remained on the field in 1792. The climate was treacherous and untried; the dangers, both to health and character, assailing young men left isolated in the West Indian environment, were extreme. The selection of candidates rested solely with Dr. Coke, whose judgement was apt to be more sanguine than cautious.

<sup>3</sup> Barbados had an element in its population, numerous in the West Indies, resembling the 'mean Whites' of the Southern United States.

<sup>4</sup> Political disaffection was at the bottom of this failure. The rebellion was already brewing which in a few years led to the suppression of Carib autonomy and the deportation of the tribe to Honduras, where we shall find it later.



flame throughout the island. To the work of Lumb, Clarke's successor in charge of St. Vincent,<sup>1</sup> he gives high commendation.

Grenada was the next mark of Coke's voyage. John Baxter sailed with him. Two friends of the Mission were awaiting the visitors—Mr. Lynch, a former Antiguan acquaintance of Baxter's, and the parish Minister, the Rev. Mr. Dent, lately curate of Bridgetown, 'the only clergyman in these islands,' writes Coke, 'that has shown any regard for the Methodists.' His championship of them had commended Dent to the Governor of Grenada—'that amiable, that admirable man, General Matthews.' Governor Matthews begged Coke to send Missionaries to Grenada. 'I wish,' he said, 'that the Negroes may be fully instructed; there will be work enough for you and the clergy of the island.'

Coke found the West Indian civil authorities generally more open-minded, and more sensible of their responsibility for the black people, than his brethren of the clergy. After Coke's first sermon in the church a mulatto freedman presented himself, a former Methodist of Antigua, who had gathered 'a Society of about twenty seeking souls.' The door stood plainly open for Methodism; a Missionary must be found for the island as soon as might be. Like Dominica, Grenada had been colonized by the French; the French tongue was spoken there, and the French Catholic priests were influential.\* From Grenada Coke and Baxter took ship for Antigua, calling at St. Vincent to pick up Lumb and Worrell by the way. They arrived on December 5; 'here,' says Coke, 'I indeed found myself at home.'

Five days later he moved on again, and adventures himself once more in St. Eustatius. Despite the remorseless persecution, 200 members were meeting in Class and reported themselves to the St. Kitts Missionary; some of these were free Negroes, who by crossing to the other island kept in touch with the Society there. A new Governor had replaced the intolerant Rennels; Dr. Coke waited upon him, only to be

<sup>1</sup> John Clarke, whom Coke stationed here in 1787, at first 'ran well,' but 'something hindered,' and his name drops from the Stations in 1790. He continued to reside in St. Vincent, for his restoration to the Society there is noted in the year 1806.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Coke eulogizes the treatment of the Negroes by the planters of Grenada, and the humane provisions of Grenadian legislation. The French colonists and their priests deserve some credit for this.

'received with very great rudeness.' However, it appeared that private Methodist meetings were now unmolested, and Coke came away in better hope for St. Eustatius. Nevis received the next visit. In this favoured islet, where the two races were on exceptionally good terms, the Missionary in charge (Thomas Owens) had seen much success. Dr. Coke now made acquaintance with the cousins Richard and Walter Nesbit, planters of Nevis, who remained in the future staunch and serviceable allies of the Mission. Coke describes Richard Nesbit as the most pious English layman he met with in the West Indies. At Charlestown, the capital, on the Sunday afternoon, he was regaled with a hearty Methodist love-feast, in which slaves and masters joined. The West Indian staff gathered here for a Conference, which extended from the 15th to the 18th December.

Christmas was spent in 'that romantic island, St. Vincent.' After some delay Dr. Coke found a ship sailing for Jamaica, on which he took passage for himself and Worrell. In that great island the chief business of the voyage lay. He landed this time (on January 5, 1791) at Montego Bay, a town of perhaps 5,000 inhabitants, situated toward the north-west corner of the island. Coke had no friend to welcome him; the letter of introduction he brought proved unavailing. He had almost despaired of finding a preaching-place, when some one suggested an assembly-room in the town, formerly the parish church, now occasionally occupied as a play-house. The proprietor proved obliging and friendly, and Dr. Coke announced that he would preach there on the four following evenings. At the first service most of the leading people of Montego Bay attended; the Negroes put in an appearance the next evening, hearing that they were welcome, and subsequently crowded into the house. 'A few rakes,' says Coke, 'attempted a disturbance; the rest of the audience listened with deep attention.' The ear of Montego Bay was won, and Coke took his leave with the promise that before long he would send a Preacher to the town.

January 10 saw Coke and Worrell setting out on horseback for Kingston—a journey over the mountains of near 130 miles. Thus travelling, they obtained a comprehensive view of the island. We must not dwell on the details of this journey,

which Coke relates in his liveliest style.<sup>1</sup> The road was difficult, sometimes dangerous, and the horses were sorry beasts. The travellers were impressed by the teeming wealth and sublime beauty of the island, and at the same time by the low morale of its inhabitants, White and Black. At Spanish Town, thirteen miles short of Kingston, the political capital, Dr. Coke made a valuable friend in a physician and man of science named Titford, with whose brother he was acquainted in London. Kingston was reached on the 14th of the month, with remarkable expedition for horsemen so ill-mounted.

At Kingston that able Preacher and energetic man, William Hammet, whom Coke left two years earlier in Tortola, had now resided some considerable time.<sup>2</sup> He had found necessity for, and means to provide (by the adaptation of premises bought for the Society), a chapel large enough to hold 1,200 worshippers; the building was excellently situated, and of superior style. Hammet's success had been achieved under a fire of persecution

far exceeding all the persecutions we have met with in the other islands unitedly considered. . . . Mr. Hammet's life has been frequently endangered. Mr. Bull, our steady friend . . . has several times narrowly escaped being stoned to death.

The chapel had to be strongly guarded, after receiving serious damage. A controversy raged for months in the local newspapers, in which slanderous abuse was heaped upon the Methodist Preachers. On the prosecution of some of the rioters they were acquitted by a local jury in the face of the clearest evidence against them; the Grand Jury advised that Hammet and his chapel should be declared a public nuisance!

Under this great fight of affliction the Preacher fell sick, and the chapel had been closed for a month when Coke arrived. He reopened it, and preached by candlelight without suffering

<sup>1</sup> See *Extracts of the Journals of the Rev. Dr. Coke's Five Visits to America* (London), 1793, pp. 130-135.

<sup>2</sup> The first Society-class in Jamaica, formed at Hammet's lodging in Kingston, consisted of eight persons whose names are given on page 28 of Peter Samuel's *Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Jamaica and Honduras*. One of the eight was Mrs. Mary Ann Akle Smith, the valiant defender of Dr. Coke at his first preaching in Kingston. This lady was a devoted supporter of the Methodist Church and an efficient Class-leader, until her death at an advanced age in 1823. Another of the band was William Harris, a free Black from the States—a greatly esteemed Class-leader known in later years as 'Father Harris'—who survived to take part in the Jubilee of Jamaican Methodism in 1839.

much annoyance from the swell mob. But for the present William Hammet's career in Jamaica was plainly ended ; he was ' worn to a skeleton.' Coke invited his disabled helper to share his approaching voyage to America, with the hope that his health would be restored and he might return to the island, to labour in the less exciting sphere of Montego Bay. But Hammet never resumed his work in the West Indies ; the struggle he had gone through had permanently sapped his strength. His abilities, however, attracted attention in the States, and he accepted an invitation from an independent Church in Charleston (South Carolina), retiring from the Methodist ministry. William Hammet deserves to be honoured as a founder of West Indian Methodism ; his withdrawal does not cancel the debt that is due to his talent, labours, and endurance.

From Kingston Coke succeeded, amidst the ribald opposition of ' the young bucks and bloods,'<sup>1</sup> in establishing Methodist worship at Spanish Town for the sake of the Negroes and coloured people, whose entreaties greatly touched him. Suffering through the growth of Kingston, Spanish Town had decayed from its grandeur ; but the Governor of Jamaica had his residence there ; there also the House of Assembly met and the Courts of Justice sat. The town was full of Government officials and Jamaican fashionables. To these an army of negro servants was attached ; and in the neighbourhood were large plantations with troops of slaves. Spanish Town and Port Royal went to form the Kingston Circuit. Examining the Class-books, Coke found here a membership of 234, of whom 150 belonged to the Kingston Society.

On January 25 Dr. Coke set sail for Charleston, having spent three eventful weeks in Jamaica and two months among the islands. Brazier he left behind as Minister at Kingston, Worrell at Spanish Town. As Dr. Coke was leaving Port Royal, news came of a strange outrage perpetrated in St. Vincent. Rioters had broken into the Methodist chapel by night, who after committing other damage, carried off the pulpit Bible, which next morning was found hanging in chains on the nearest gallows !

<sup>1</sup> The enmity of white society in the West Indies to Methodism was undoubtedly influenced by the reproofs the Preachers gave to its profligacy, and by the repugnance to its lusts awakened among negro and coloured women.



The chief result of Coke's third visit to the West Indies was the survey of Jamaica and the consolidation of Methodism in its capital town ; plans were also laid for occupying the west of the island. In the older Circuits (including St. Eustatius) cheering progress had been witnessed on all hands, with the one sorrowful exception of the abandoned Mission to the Caribs. To Tortola, where the work of Divine grace had been truly amazing, Coke had regretfully given the go-by for want of time.

In his fifth American tour Dr. Coke made for the continent first ; it was not until the last day of 1792 that he landed at St. Eustatius. He was accompanied by William Black of Nova Scotia, whom he designated for General Superintendent of the West Indian stations. Black was coming to be introduced to the work and to the staff before entering upon his office. This appointment, which Dr. Coke had much at heart, in the end he was compelled to cancel. In St. Eustatius Governor Rennels<sup>1</sup> had been re-appointed since Coke's last visit, and persecution had become more searching than ever. Throughout the island the Methodist slaves were undergoing flogging and imprisonment. 'The consequence has been,' writes Coke, 'that the precious Society we had here is almost dispersed,' although its meetings supplied the only Christian worship existing in St. Eustatius. Coke declares his assurance that God 'will turn the world upside down' rather than fail to avenge a wrong like this ! A couple of negro women of St. Eustatius, condemned to the lash for nothing more than 'being present at a Methodist prayer-meeting,' played the martyr indeed. 'While great furrows were made in their bleeding backs, they assured the multitudes that they prized the torments they endured above all the gold and silver in the world !' . . . They gave such indubitable proofs of the power of religion, of patient suffering and triumphant faith, that some principal gentlemen of the island, present on the occasion, 'acknowledged' the infliction to be scandalous. Coke is 'persuaded that nothing but power and opportunity are wanting to make Governor Rennels as cruel a persecutor as any in the primitive times of Christianity.' For the present there was no remedy.

<sup>1</sup> So Coke gives the man's name earlier in the journal ; it now appears as *Rennolds* ; Moister spells it *Runnels*.



One scene of violence and wrong succeeded another. Arriving at St. Kitts from St. Eustatius, Coke received news of 'a dreadful persecution' going on in St. Vincent; Matthew Lumb was lying in gaol, condemned for preaching to the Blacks. Instantly he set off thither. Spending a night in Nevis by the way, he fell in with a 'dissolute, blaspheming' company, whose behaviour was such as 'almost to make me thankful,' he writes, 'that the regular lives of these pests of society must necessarily in this torrid zone soon root them out of the land of the living!' He met Richard Pattison, the new Nevis Missionary, sent out from England in 1792—a young man of excellent sense and fidelity, who did good service in the West Indies while his health lasted. Coke also touched at Dominica on his journey to St. Vincent, to hear the sad tale of the death of William McCornock, whom he had left here two years before. Within six months this man of God had fallen a victim to the deadly climate and his self-forgetting toil.

There had been none to fill the empty place. 'The fields,' writes Coke, 'are white unto harvest; but alas, there are none to reap them!' Several years elapsed before Dominica could be reoccupied, and much ground was lost by the delay.

On January 6, 1793, Dr. Coke reached the field of the battle for religious liberty. A body of planters, commanding a temporary majority in the St. Vincent House of Assembly, had voted the prohibition of preaching to the Negroes. For the first offence the penalty of imprisonment, or a heavy fine, was imposed; for the second, corporal punishment at the magistrate's discretion, to be followed by banishment; for the third, should the offender dare to return and repeat his crime, *death*! Parish rectors, or other Preachers licensed by the Government, were excepted from this inhibition. No person could, however, be licensed till after twelve months' residence in the island. This monstrous piece of legislation, as every one knew, was aimed at Methodism. The mass movement of the Negroes toward the Gospel had alarmed a powerful section of the property-holders, while the best people of the island greatly respected Mr. Lumb, and (as Coke believed) the majority of the resident Whites reprobated the persecuting Act. It was law, nevertheless, until quashed by imperial authority. To submit to this veto was, for Matthew Lumb, to obey man rather than God. He preached, therefore, to White and Black

on the Sunday after its promulgation just as before. By the next Thursday he was in gaol. Continuing to speak of the things of God through the prison-bars to the Negroes who crowded to hear his voice, he was ordered into closer confinement, and a pair of malefactors were placed in the same damp and filthy cell. His white friends were allowed to visit him and to supply his needs ; but all communication with black or coloured persons was prevented. Finding that he could do nothing on the spot for his friend's release, Coke withdrew, after making such arrangements as he could for the care of the Society. A few weeks later he called again at St. Vincent, but the situation was unchanged. Appeal was made to the Colonial Office in London ; and after his return to England Dr. Coke had the satisfaction, at the end of August,<sup>1</sup> of witnessing the annulment by the Crown of the Colonial Act in restraint of preaching to the Negroes. This repeal was vital to the West Indian Mission.

Lumb had been released on the promise of silence, before the obnoxious Act was cancelled in St. Vincent, toward the close of the year.<sup>2</sup> His health was so broken that he had to return to England. For many years thereafter he 'travelled' in the home circuits, a valued and useful Minister.

In 1794 Thomas Owens, one of the most trusted of the West Indian staff, was sent to pick up the dropped threads of Lumb's work in St. Vincent. Persecution had reduced the Society by more than half its numbers. Scarcely had that trouble passed and Methodism begun to lift up its head again when there broke out a rebellion of the St. Vincent Caribs, in which many of the French colonists were involved. The war with France, which disturbed the whole Caribbean Sea at this time, made the struggle dangerous. The Caribs fought hard ; nearly 4,000 British troops were required for their suppression. In the *Minutes* for 1795 we read : 'This island and Grenada (also attacked by the French) are in so dreadful a state that the work of God seems quite at a stand.' By the end of that year the storm was over. The planting of Methodism in the soil of St. Vincent had been so sure that it recovered quickly its

<sup>1</sup> The Colonial Secretary, before advising the veto, sent an inquiry to various West Indian Islands as to the conduct of the Wesleyan Missionaries, and received very favourable reports.

<sup>2</sup> An offer was made by a gentleman of the island to meet the money-fine payable in lieu of imprisonment, but Lumb declined this generous proposal upon principle.

former growth; in 1797 the Circuit reports a Church membership of more than a thousand.

From St. Vincent Dr. Coke passed to the neighbouring half-French island of Grenada, at which he had made a call on his last previous tour. Here the Methodists were encouraged by the friendship of the Rector, Mr. Dent. Thomas Owens had laboured for a short time on this island,<sup>1</sup> and had gathered a small Society, to the care of which Abraham Bishop now succeeded. This saintly man and gifted evangelist was a native of the Channel Islands, whose ministry had been blessed with extraordinary success in the young colony of New Brunswick. Hearing of his great usefulness and knowing that he was a bilingual Preacher, Coke commandeered him for Grenada. Bishop's career resembled that of the devoted McCornock in Dominica. New to the tropics and eager for his work, he exposed himself unguardedly, and succumbed to fever before he was seasoned to the climate. Such has been in repeated instances the fate of ardent young Missionaries in the West Indies. Bishop was a man of exceptional charm as well as power; Dent the clergyman 'loved him as his own child.' Richard Pattison and Benjamin Pearce subsequently occupied the Grenada station in turn. The latter—'a man of untiring zeal and energy'—fell in the prime of his strength, when just commencing his work there in 1794. For years the Grenada Society depended on occasional visits from Missionaries of other islands, and on the local preaching of Francis Hallett, Dent's parish-clerk at St. George's, who later entered the Wesleyan ministry.

Not till 1805 was a Missionary procurable for Grenada, and he died of fever within a year. At this date the Society numbered 100. These repeated fatalities, and the lack of Preachers expert (like Abraham Bishop) in the French language, combined, as in the case of Dominica, to limit Methodist success in Grenada. This island, moreover, was specially distracted by the French war.

After a week spent in Grenada Dr. Coke made for St. Kitts, where he landed on January 26, to find 'religion flourishing like a green olive-tree in the house of God.' From St. Kitts

<sup>1</sup> Coke records with admiration Owens' refusal of a good 'living' offered him by Governor Matthews in a Grenada parish, where he would have enjoyed a stipend thrice that of a Wesleyan Missionary.

he took the opportunity to visit Tortola, and to inspect the gratifying work accomplished since the occupation of the Virgin Islands four years earlier. Here again he comes on the track of Thomas Owens, by whose 'address and good management' a 'warm persecution' had, 'under a gracious providence,' been 'entirely extinguished.' The Tortola Church was favoured indeed to have had Hammet for its 'planter' and Owens to 'water' the seed. 'On this little spot,' writes Coke, 'we have 1,400 awakened Negroes in Society, blessed be God!'

To Antigua a Conference of the West Indian staff had been summoned, and Coke hastened thither, taking up the St. Kitts and Nevis Missionaries as he passed. A violent storm delayed the party; but they reached harbour safely on February 5. This was the third Conference held in the islands; the business had grown since the former meeting to dimensions requiring a five days' sitting. Stations were fixed for the coming year, and additional regulations made for Circuit management and the discipline of the Societies.<sup>1</sup> 'Our debates,' reports Coke, 'were full and free.' William Black appears to have been present; he was appointed to St. Christopher. Ten Circuits were mapped out, including Montserrat, which had been visited from Antigua and had a Society of twelve members. A Missionary was to be posted there as soon as possible; 'the persecuting spirit of the Irish Roman Catholics, who make a considerable part of the people,' writes Coke, for the present barred the way. For the above Circuits twelve Missionaries in all were available.

The total number of Church members was 6,570, of whom only 120 were Whites. The 'coloured' members are distinguished in some of the Circuit returns, where they appear as in the total scarcely more numerous than the Whites—a ratio that increased as time went on. From its beginning, Methodism in the West Indies assumed the character of the Church of the Negroes, as the Anglican Communion was the Church of the

<sup>1</sup> A note appended to the West Indian Stations in the *Minutes* for 1794 shows that this Conference was meant to be an annual gathering; it was suspended for that year on account of the war with France, and because few removals were necessary amongst the Preachers. Alas, the West Indian Conference remained in suspense for ninety years! It was 1806 before even District Synods were instituted in this province. Up till that date the West Indian Circuits were supervised by Dr. Coke and his somewhat shadowy committee from England, without any corporate local authority or means of consultation on the part of the Missionaries—a most undesirable, not to say unconstitutional, state of things, out of which trouble inevitably arose. Black, on whom Coke counted for 'General Superintendent' in the Islands, the Nova Scotians refused to give up.



colonists. Coke visited at this time English Harbour, the seat of the British naval establishment in Antigua<sup>1</sup>—‘the finest and most commodious harbour of any’ he had seen ‘in America, except that of Halifax (N.S.).’

On February 15 Dr. Coke embarked for Barbados. In this island the Mission had proved distinctly disappointing. Devoted and competent Missionaries had laboured here; they were backed by influential friends. The persecution encountered at Bridgetown was of a kind under which Methodism has often thriven. ‘For some reason that I cannot explain,’ writes Coke, ‘the Negroes of Barbados are much less prepared for the reception of genuine religion than those of any other island in the West Indies.’ The whole Society numbered but 51, two-thirds of them being Whites—a proportion the reverse of the ordinary. It was many years before the black folk in any numbers were brought into the Church. Possibly the fact that the first Society in the island was markedly *White* made the Blacks shy of it! The white population of Barbados at this date exceeded that of the great island of Jamaica. Coke anticipates a large accession to the Society from this quarter—the more so because two Local Preachers were already forthcoming, and there were families in Bridgetown that ‘breathed the spirit of the English Methodists.’ He was delighted to meet in the country an old Oxford ‘chum’—Mr. Henry, a wealthy gentleman, in whom another friend was won for Methodism. This time Dr. Coke stayed above three weeks in Barbados; on March 22 he sailed for Kingston.

The two Missionaries left in Jamaica a couple of years before—William Brazier and Thomas Worrell—had both disappeared, the former retiring for lack of health, the latter dying of fever.<sup>2</sup> Worrell is commemorated as ‘a most promising young man,’ who had ‘a short but successful ministry.’ William Fish, on his arrival in the islands from England in the previous May, had been sent at once to Kingston. Later, Daniel Graham, sailing with Coke from home, was also dispatched thither. Graham, like Worrell, a volunteer from the Irish ministry, had a course similarly brief and honourable. A man of great piety, he was cut off at Barbados in the epidemic of yellow

<sup>1</sup> Here John Baxter had exercised his trade as a shipwright.

<sup>2</sup> Brazier broke down first, but came back to the work on Worrell’s death. His health, however, seems to have failed once more, and he withdrew finally to his home in St. Kitts.



fever which proved fatal to Bishop. Fish had previously 'travelled' seven years in England; to the Mission he proved a tower of strength. For thirteen years he laboured here, being almost the only man amongst Coke's early West Indian helpers to develop *staying* power.<sup>1</sup> His whole missionary course was run in Jamaica, where he stood the brunt of the sorest persecution, and for four years occupied this wide field alone. The second founder of Jamaican Methodism, Fish, was a Missionary of noble spirit, exemplary patience and fidelity, and fine pastoral qualities; he won a rare influence in the island. After his health failed in Jamaica he spent eleven years in the home pastorate.<sup>2</sup>

From Kingston Coke travelled westwards overland to Montego Bay. This time he journeyed more slowly, and called at the Moravian settlement in the west of the island, where he was pleasantly entertained and much encouraged. At Montego Bay 'the rakes' disturbed his preaching and assaulted his travelling companion; but defenders stepped forward, and Coke returned to Kingston convinced that in and about Montego Bay 'the Lord had much people.' A strong impression was made on the negro hearers; 'a Class might at once have been formed of earnest, seeking souls,' had there been any Leader to put in charge. This Falmouth of the New World was to become in after days another centre of Jamaican Methodism. Coke completed the tour of the island by reaching Kingston on April 12.

Within two days Dr. Coke left Port Royal harbour by the English packet, to see his great flock in the western isles no more. Four times thereafter the active little man crossed the Atlantic, to exercise his Episcopal functions of visitation, Conference-presidency, and ordination in the United States; on none of these occasions was he able to include the West Indies in his tour—a failure much to be regretted, since he had gained in the islands a host of personal friends and a singular popularity. His presence and authority were greatly needed by the young, scattered, and sorely tried Missionaries; whereas on the continent Bishop Asbury and his native lieutenants were sufficient to themselves. On the second of these later

<sup>1</sup> William Warrener kept the field for eleven years. None of their contemporaries approached this length of service.

<sup>2</sup> Debilitated as he was, William Fish reached his eightieth year, enjoying a long and useful eventide of life in the salubrious island of Guernsey, where he died in 1843.

voyages (his seventh Atlantic crossing), in the autumn of 1797, Coke was borne to the Caribbean Sea against his will, the vessel on which he sailed being captured by a French privateer and taken as a prize to Puerto Rico. Robbed of his baggage and in doleful plight, he made his way with all speed to the United States, to fulfil his engagements there.

In the seven years covered by Thomas Coke's personal administration in the West Indies, during which he was not much more than as many months actually on the islands, the Methodist Mission had been extended from Antigua to some ten other islands, including the most important under British dominion; the number of Missionaries employed had been multiplied from one to twelve; chapels had been built—several of them of large dimensions—in the chief centres of population; and the two thousand souls gathered into Christ's fold under John Baxter's shepherding in Antigua had increased to nearly seven thousand registered in the ten West Indian Circuits. This great work of God had been effected in a spiritual wilderness.

Dr. Coke's interest in the West Indies was little abated by the cessation of his visits; his responsibility for Methodist work there was in no way diminished. Up to the Conference of 1813 he remained the General Superintendent of Missions, and exercised his office with plenary power. In a peculiar sense he felt himself to be the father of the West Indian Churches. He spent upon them much of his fortune, bearing almost unaided the cost of his journeys in their promotion, meeting the current necessities of the work freely from his private purse, and advancing in some cases a large part of the funds required for Church plant. The Missionaries corresponded with him as with a father, and depended upon his advice and support. From Dr. Coke's hand they received their appointments and stipends; to him they made their requests and appeals. The whole business of the undertaking continued to pass through his hands. He was, in effect, the dictator of the foreign work of Methodism; and throughout the period of his superintendency 'Foreign Missions' meant chiefly the Missions to the West Indies; those established in British North America were as yet of small dimensions.

During the twenty years intervening between Dr. Coke's departure from the West Indies and his death (May, 1814), the

Methodist membership in the islands was more than doubled, amounting to 17,000 at the later date. The Mission staff grew in the same period from twelve to thirty, including two men 'of colour' and several others island-reared. The Bahamas and Bermuda were by the year 1813 embraced in the Society's operations.

### III

## THE STRUGGLE IN JAMAICA

### (I) THE TOWN

A Story of Conflict and Suffering—William Fish at Kingston—Three New Missionaries—The Local Legislature—The Act of Christmas Day, 1802—Bradnock, Gilgrass, and Knowlan—Renewed Opposition—Pro-Slavery Animus—The Act Annulled—Wiggins and Johnston—Great Increase in Church Membership—A Succession of notable Missionaries—The Resolutions of Canning—Their Effect on the Slave-owners—Missionary Resolutions—‘The Sectarian Committee’ and ‘The Colonial Church Union’—Returns of Church Membership in 1832.

THE Missions planted by Dr. Thomas Coke in the West Indies, which he continued to direct from England until 1813, were extended during the period of his management over nearly all the islands under British rule, and into the Dutch and Danish islands besides. The conditions of the work were in general the same throughout the field—a small class of ruling and land-owning white colonists held in subjection a multitude of negro slaves imported from Africa, who supplied the manual labour of the islands, tilling the estates and working the sugar factories of their masters. Besides these two classes there was a considerable body of free Negroes and a population of mixed race—the ‘coloured’ people—who lived as small cultivators, mechanics, tradesmen, and superior employees, often keeping slaves themselves. Until the coming of the Missionaries—Moravian, Methodist, and Baptist—the bulk of the Negroes remained as heathen as in their native Africa; only where the French Roman Catholic priests laboured had any serious attempt been made to Christianize them. Many of the more respectable white residents, including a section of the planters, welcomed Dr. Coke’s proposals for the Christian instruction of the black people, as others had encouraged, or even introduced, the Moravian teachers already; but the majority of the proprietors opposed the Methodist propaganda, regarding it

as subversive of the existing order. Upon this subject white society was violently divided. In Jamaica the opposition to the Missionaries passed all bounds and grew more furious with the approach of Emancipation.

The history of the Mission up to the year 1833 is therefore a story of struggle and suffering. To follow in detail the incidents of progress and trial in the several islands would be a too laborious task. The study of the chief example will enable us to grasp the entire situation and to realize the issue at stake; from the leading case of Jamaica we may learn the inwardness of the conflict between the new light of the Gospel and the system of negro slavery, which put its brand of degradation on the master as well as upon his bondsman, verifying the word of Jesus that 'whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin.' By far the largest of the British West Indies, and outweighing all the rest together in importance, Jamaica was the stronghold of the slave-holding interest. The principles of West Indian slavery were developed here to their farthest limits; here the passions excited by the struggle rose to their highest pitch, and the scenes of disorder and violence to which they gave rise were the most demonstrative. In Jamaica, at the outset, Dr. Coke came into collision with the ruffianism of West Indian colonial life and realized its pervasive corruption. From the time of his preaching at Kingston and of William Hammet's ministry and the building of the first chapel there, Methodism awakened a vehement resistance in the forces of evil entrenched in that place. The success or failure of the Mission turned upon the vindication of its Gospel in Jamaica. Kingston, more than any other spot, was the strategic point of the contention for evangelical truth and religious liberty in the West Indies. This topic accordingly forms the subject of the two following chapters; after its consideration we shall be able to survey more rapidly the contemporary work of the Mission in the other islands.

When in April, 1793, Dr. Coke bade his final good-bye to the West Indies he left a single Minister in charge of the Societies founded at Kingston, Port Royal, and Spanish Town, containing 170 members (40 Whites and 130 Blacks), and of the large congregation worshipping in the Parade Chapel at Kingston. William Fish had been then for nearly a year on the island, having succeeded the disabled Brazier in May, 1792.



He was an older man than most of Coke's helpers, better seasoned both in physical constitution and pastoral experience, and instead of being shifted from island to island on the itinerant principle, he was allowed to remain in Jamaica. To this circumstance, which gave the sterling qualities of the man opportunity to win their due influence, the firm establishment of Methodism in Jamaica after Hammet's breakdown and Coke's departure may be attributed. The Churches of the Kingston Circuit for a space 'had rest and were multiplied.' By the year 1798 Fish, who was a strict disciplinarian, was able to report more than 600 Methodist members in the island. Amongst the Class-leaders and chief helpers at Kingston were the invaluable Mrs. Mary Ann Smith, and a free Black man of the name of John Constant, a man of delightful temper and holy influence known as 'the peacemaker.' These two counteracted certain fractious elements disturbing the little Church. Mr. Fishley, Coke's first friend in Port Royal, proved a tower of strength to Methodism so long as he lived; after his death, which took place in 1796, the Port Royal Society dwindled away, to be resuscitated in 1822. Seven years later substantial Methodist premises were erected at Port Royal, and the Society consolidated its position in this important place of traffic. In 1830 Thomas Murray was stationed there, the first resident Missionary.

The white roysterers who had assailed Coke at Spanish Town, took little notice of the negro Methodist company, which continued after his departure to gather in an obscure back-street. The Spanish Town Society in the early years assumed no large proportions, but maintained an even and peaceful course. In 1816, when the Church membership numbered 65, Spanish Town was made the head of a new Circuit; from this date progress became more marked. William Ratcliffe's ministry here, a few years later, was attended by its usual success; a respectable chapel and Missionary's house were now secured. The death of the young and saintly Obadiah Adams in 1819 gave an added consideration to the work of the Spanish Town Circuit, which in the next year reported 160 Church members. Soon after this an extension was made to Old Harbour on the coast, twelve miles south-west of Spanish Town, where the mission took firm root. John Shipman, Robert Young, and John Barry

laboured at Spanish Town during the later twenties; their vigorous ministry had its due effect. The congregations in Spanish Town and Old Harbour overflowed the chapels; and new and spacious sanctuaries were raised by the efforts of the people. In 1882 the Circuit membership had risen to 720, more than half of them consisting of free people.

At Kingston William Fish's gentler preaching did not stir the resentment provoked by Hammet's eloquent invectives; when for a while the Methodist services were disturbed, he obtained protection from the magistrates. For some years Methodism pursued its work in the city without overt persecution, though subject to abundant ridicule. In July, 1794, John McVean arrived to share the Superintendent's too heavy burden, being removed by the General Superintendent from Nevis to Jamaica. In the *Minutes* of 1797, and for several years thereafter, 350 of the members of Society counted in this Circuit are credited to 'the plantations.' Fish obtained admittance to several large estates in the country, where he instructed the slaves with great assiduity. At the same time Fishley, of Port Royal, reporting to Dr. Coke, relates that the new Minister (McVean) is receiving 'daily invitations to preach to the poor Blacks from those (estate-managers and proprietors) who were not long since avowed enemies of all religion.' This became a principal and a fruitful part of the work of the two men. The Negroes of the town, and those of the plantations and country settlements of Jamaica, appear to have formed communities more distinct than in the smaller islands.

Coke did not forget Montego Bay, he charged Fish to give an eye to this place, and to visit the west of the island whenever he could. Now the opportunity came. Finding McVean a capable man, Fish devolved the Kingston work upon him, proceeding himself to reopen the Mission at Montego Bay, which he sought to make a centre for evangelizing Western Jamaica. In this endeavour he had gained encouraging success, forming a Society of about a score persons and gathering a good congregation in the Montego Bay assembly-room formerly used by Dr. Coke,<sup>1</sup> when a year after his coming the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jeremiah Brown, Coke's host in Montego Bay, who had given him the use of this preaching-hall, showed the same kindness to his successor. This building was destroyed in the fire which devastated the town shortly before the Maroon war.

Maroon war broke out. By this event the whole district was thrown into confusion, and friends of the Negroes became objects of odium and suspicion.<sup>1</sup> Though he struggled bravely against adversity, Fish was compelled to quit the field. He would have had the free black and coloured Methodists remove with him to Kingston, but failed to persuade them to this step. Two years later (in 1799) McVean's successor, Daniel Campbell, was sent down to resume the work in Montego Bay; he was driven away with insult and contumely. The temper of the white folk had completely changed, and for nearly twenty years the door remained closed to Methodism at Montego Bay.

The return of Superintendent Fish to Kingston in 1797 was the more imperative because McVean had fallen into a dangerous sickness, which speedily terminated his labours. Under his able ministry large accessions had been made to the Kingston Society; but Fish found that through McVean's 'unsuspecting, hopeful temperament' the door of entrance had been made too wide. He was obliged to shut out from the Church a considerable body of members admitted on insufficient trial; the discipline proved salutary. Once more, after McVean's death, Fish stood alone; he thus pleads with Dr. Coke for assistance:

Surely if you saw the prospect of success in this part of the island<sup>2</sup> and knew how distressed we are for want of help, you would send us at least two or three fellow labourers without delay. My regard for the people of Kingston is such that I could rejoice to spend my last breath in serving them. Though I have so much work that sometimes I hardly know what to do first, yet it is all pleasant and delightful; and though constantly engaged, abroad or at home, from four in the morning till ten at night, I bless God I scarcely know what fatigue is, so graciously has the Lord renewed my strength during my voyage from Montego Bay.

<sup>1</sup> Agitations amongst the Negroes invariably provoked persecution of Methodists and Dissenters; as invariably, they were acquitted, on impartial inquiry, of complicity in seditious movements. Where State and Church are identified and the political sovereign is head of the Church, 'dissent' and rebellion are apt to be identified. The prejudice from which the Methodists and Baptists suffered in the colonies was not more unreasonable, nor less natural in the minds of bigoted patriots under the State-Church system, than that which identified Wesley and his followers in 1745-46 with the cause of the Stuart Pretender.

<sup>2</sup> The ill-will toward the Methodists arising from the Maroon troubles seems to have been quite local. Their liberal contribution in the Kingston Circuit toward the patriotic fund raised in Jamaica to assist the Government in prosecuting the war was calculated to disarm any suspicion of their sympathy with the insurgents; £150 was a large sum to be subscribed by a community of a few hundred people, the bulk of whom were Negroes, and the majority slaves!

In answer to this winning plea, three new Missionaries came to Kingston, arriving in the spring of 1798 ; these were James Alexander, William Fowler, and Daniel Campbell.

This liberal reinforcement promised an extension of the work which failed of realization. Alexander, who had laboured several years already in the islands, was obliged shortly to return to England. Fowler's name appears in the Mission Stations of 1798, only to be transferred to the home list in the following year. Fish sent him to Manchioneal, at the north-east point of Jamaica, where a promising opening appeared ; in a few months he was invalided home, and this important post had to be abandoned. The name replacing Fowler's in the *Minutes* for 1799 was equally transient.<sup>1</sup> Daniel Campbell alone of the four proved serviceable.

For two years under the ministry of Fish and Campbell the Mission in and around Kingston prospered steadily, though with no large growth in Church membership. But in 1802 a storm broke out which assumed the most formidable character. Peter Samuel thus describes its origin :

The conversion of some females of colour who used to be the easy prey of licentious men exasperated the enemies of religion, many of whom were armed with wealth, place, and power. The rabble, under such patronage, began to interrupt the meetings and disturb the public peace.<sup>2</sup>

At the ensuing Court of Quarter Sessions information was laid against the Methodist preaching-houses as ' public nuisances ' ; the prosecution upon this count failed, and the Missionaries were vindicated.

Foiled in their first assault, the enemy adopted the St. Vincent plan of operating through the local Legislature, which was ready to lend itself to the purpose through the growing fear of negro enlightenment felt by the landed proprietors. On Christmas Day, 1802, an Act of the House of Assembly,

<sup>1</sup> The early return of so many young Missionaries from the West Indies gave the Conference anxious concern. In 1802 regulations were laid down on the subject to the following effect : that Missionaries sent out when already ' in full connexion ' should labour in the West Indies at least four years ; men previously serving at home on probation five years ; new probationers six years. Further, that any man who, within the assigned period, should find himself through sudden failure in health compelled to leave the islands, should remove to Bermuda or to North America, there to await instructions from home ; and that no Missionary should return to England without permission first received. This last rule proved in urgent cases impracticable ; and neither Bermuda nor the North American Stations could receive more than a very few West Indian invalids.

<sup>2</sup> *Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Jamaica, &c.*, p. 34.



duly signed by Governor Nugent, was published, which fell like a thunderbolt upon Jamaican Methodism. The persons against whom it was aimed were described as 'ill-disposed, illiterate, and ignorant enthusiasts,' who addressed 'meetings of Negroes and persons of colour, chiefly slaves, unlawfully assembled,' filling their minds with fanatical notions and inciting them to 'concoct schemes of much private and public mischief.' The Act declares any person 'presuming to preach under pretence of being a minister of religion . . . and 'not duly qualified and authorized' according to 'the laws of this island and of Great Britain,' liable to be treated as 'a rogue and vagabond' and punished accordingly.<sup>1</sup> Any single magistrate is empowered, on sworn information, summarily to commit the alleged offender, being a black or coloured person, to gaol. The accused is to be tried before this magistrate, associated with two other Justices from the same parish.<sup>2</sup> Upon conviction, the penalty in the case of a free person was to be for the first offence a month's imprisonment with hard labour; for every subsequent offence, six months under the same conditions. The convicted slave preacher for the first offence was to be punished as aforesaid; for its repetition he should be publicly flogged, within the limit of thirty-nine lashes, on each occasion. A *white* offender would be admitted to bail for his appearance before the next Assizes. 'On conviction' he must 'suffer such punishment as such court shall see fit to inflict, not extending to life.'

The Jamaica Act for the suppression of Methodism<sup>3</sup> was not quite so shameless nor so barbarous as that passed in St. Vincent a few years earlier, which the Crown had promptly disallowed; it was more carefully drawn and more plausibly expressed. But its intention was the same; had it been allowed to stand, that purpose would doubtless have been effected. The battle for religious liberty fought out in Great Britain a century earlier had begun in Jamaica. Canada had to go through the like struggle a generation later. There it was a battle

<sup>1</sup> Occasionally adventurers answering to the above description, without commission from any recognized religious body, made their way to the West Indies and caused trouble amongst the Negroes. The proceedings of these persons gave some colour to the attacks made in the Legislature upon the Missionaries.

<sup>2</sup> The magistrates throughout Jamaica were, as a rule, the chief slave-owners of the parish, who again were the electors to the House of Assembly. Accusers, judges, and legislators were practically one and the same body.

<sup>3</sup> The Baptist Mission was not yet in the field.



for equal rights and fair play against Anglican prerogative ; here the conflict assumed a more deadly character, being inflamed by the licentious passions and base fears engendered in a slave-holding community. In this case, as in that of the St. Vincent Act, the conclusive penalties designed for the Missionaries are left to the discretion of the judge ; the Jamaican legislators are so far the more merciful that they stop short of the death sentence. On the other hand, they extended their net to catch owners of property who should ' knowingly permit ' upon their premises ' any meeting or assembly of Negroes or people of colour, for the purpose of hearing the preaching or teaching of any person above described '—the aforesaid ' preaching rogues and vagabonds ' ! Thus an instrument was devised for suppressing all preaching to the Negroes.

The Act of Christmas Day, 1802, arrested at once the work of lay Preachers and broke one of the main arms of Methodism. The Missionaries who came furnished in each case with a licence signed by the Lord Mayor of London, the senior Ministers having their ordination-certificates besides, presumed these documents to be a sufficient warrant in Jamaica, as elsewhere in the British dominions. Campbell, was however, arrested in January, 1803, for having preached to Negroes in the previous year at Morant Bay<sup>1</sup>—an important place thirty-one miles east of Kingston, where Methodist services had been commenced by Kingston Local Preachers. Producing his credentials and appealing to the English Toleration Act, he claimed to be duly licensed and exempt from the recent prohibition. His plea was at first admitted ; and the Kingston counsel whose advice he sought assured him that his British title held good in Jamaica. He therefore continued his work ; but a month later he was re-arrested at Morant Bay. The

<sup>1</sup> Campbell's arrest followed upon that of John Williams, a coloured Local Preacher of talent and power and a man of remarkable character, resident in Morant Bay, who had been recently converted there, and was obnoxious to the local magnates. Williams had taken care not to *preach* at Morant Bay ; he had sung and prayed with a few friends in his own house. The judges would not see the difference. Samuel traces the anti-Methodist animus at Morant Bay to the same secret cause which inspired it in Kingston ; ' the conversion of some coloured females,' he writes (*Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Jamaica*, &c., p. 128), ' exasperated those whose licentious passions blinded them to the pure word of God.' Peter Duncan fixes the guilt of the persecution and of the subsequent attempts of the Legislature to suppress Methodism upon a wealthy proprietor owning estates in several parts of the island—a man of extraordinary ability and iron will, but of flagitious life, who possessed an autocratic influence in Jamaica at this period. The ostensible persecutors, Duncan believes, were this man's tools ; he was resolved to hound Campbell out of the island. See Duncan's *Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica*, Chapter III.

bench of four magistrates who now tried him, reversing the former judgement, committed him to prison under the Act. On appeal to the Supreme Court of Jamaica, the Chief Justice pronounced in the prisoner's favour; but he was out-voted by his two co-assessors.<sup>1</sup> The counsel for the prosecution grounded his argument mainly on the dangers threatening Jamaica from the infecting of the Negroes with revolutionary ideas.<sup>2</sup> So Campbell was remitted to the Morant Bay prison, where he completed the term of his sentence.

On Campbell's release he applied to the May Quarter Sessions at Kingston for a preaching licence; this his senior colleague had obtained some time before.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile the Morant Bay Methodists were deprived of their religious ordinances. Armed with the Kingston licence, Fish and Campbell presented themselves at Morant Bay, expecting to have the permission endorsed there. The Chairman of the Bench replied, giving no reasons, 'The magistrates are unanimously resolved to grant no licence.' The Morant Bay Justices further issued a warrant to apprehend Messrs. Campbell and Williams as liable to a penalty of £100 for permitting unlicensed preaching on their premises.<sup>4</sup> For some time Campbell, who resided in Kingston, evaded arrest. He was informed that beside the exaction of the above fine he would be required to give securities (to be fixed at the option of the magistrates) against any future breach of the law, and that, failing such securities, he would be committed to the Morant Bay prison for an indefinite period.<sup>5</sup> Seeing no other means of escape from his relentless persecutors, Daniel Campbell went home to England,

<sup>1</sup> At that time the Chief Justice was the only member of the Court qualified by a legal training. His fellow justices were planters or merchants nominated by the Governor, who in cases of this nature were almost inevitably partisans.

<sup>2</sup> To understand the panic prevailing in Jamaica on this account we must bear in mind not only the recent rising of the Maroons and their desperate courage and skill, but the horrors of the negro revolution in adjacent Haiti.

<sup>3</sup> Duncan regards this move on Fish's part as mistaken; it was a virtual acknowledgement of the insufficiency of his English credentials as a Christian Minister, and furnished a precedent by which his brethren were subsequently bound, to their extreme inconvenience. Up to this date there had been no law in Jamaica requiring preachers, or chapels, to be licensed. Henceforward the necessity was assumed, and a fresh license was insisted on for every parish! As Duncan points out, until Methodist preaching began the question of toleration had not arisen in the island and the statute-book was a blank upon the subject.

<sup>4</sup> The rooms used by the Society at Morant Bay were hired in the joint names of Campbell and Williams.

<sup>5</sup> A long imprisonment in the West Indian gaols was, for a European, almost tantamount to a sentence of death.

and returned to Jamaica no more. Had he held out six or seven months longer, he would have triumphed ; for in June, 1804, the King in Council disallowed the Jamaica Act in suppression of preaching to the Negroes, and all proceedings taken under it fell to the ground.

Once more William Fish was left alone.<sup>1</sup> His colleague was gone ; his Local Preachers were silenced ; his own ministry, by the terms of his jealously watched licence, was confined to the Kingston parish. In that town the congregations were increased rather than diminished through the persecution. Popular sympathy was drawn to this holy man, so patient under the contradiction of sinners ; the motives of his assailants were well understood<sup>2</sup> ; and when the decision of the King in Council against the Jamaica Act of 1802 arrived, it was hailed with widespread satisfaction. Fish was now in a position to reap the harvest of his long endurance ; but by the time the storm had been weathered his strength was spent. For thirteen years he had 'toiled terribly' in the exhausting climate, taking no furlough. He came home to England in 1806, reluctantly, for recuperation, hoping to resume his well-loved task ; but his constitution was permanently impaired, and the West Indies never saw him again. Though he left behind him a Church numbering little above 800, in size far below that of Antigua or Tortola, he had earned for Methodism in Jamaica a character of incalculable value, and laid foundations on which others thereafter would prosperously build.

Isaac Bradnack, who had served his probation on the Windward Isles and was sent to assist Fish, had to replace him. Bradnack was joined in his first year at Kingston by William Gilgrass, a man of much force and vivacity. Both of the new-comers on arrival report highly of the spiritual state of the Societies ; they find doors of usefulness open in many parts of the island.

Various attempts had been made since Dr. Coke's departure to organize the West Indian work by grouping the islands under the supervision of the more experienced Missionaries. In the *Minutes* of 1789 Fish was directed to 'have a general

<sup>1</sup> A childless and wifeless man, his people were everything to him ; he lived in the spirit of 1 Thess. ii. 7 and 10, 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> An illuminating remark appears in the report of a brother Missionary, made some years later : 'The Preachers preach against *sin*, and, I assure you, that is sufficiently seditious for many West Indian ears !'

oversight' of the newly commenced Bahamas Mission, along with Jamaica; the same vague authority was given to Baxter in the islands reaching from Antigua to Grenada. This expedient proved inadequate. At length in 1806 the system of Connexional Districts, with their Chairmen and Annual Synods, adopted by home Methodism ten years earlier, was extended to the West Indies. Four Districts were thus created—those of Antigua, St. Christopher, Jamaica,<sup>1</sup> and the Bahamas.

To the Jamaica staff was added James Knowlan, arriving in 1807, a vigorous, thoughtful, able young Preacher, who afterwards distinguished himself in the northern colonies. The three were men of gifts and power; this strong appointment marks the determination of the Missionary Committee to forward the work in Jamaica. Their preaching was attractive; the large Kingston Chapel became too strait for the hearers, and blessing attended the word spoken. 'Past troubles,' writes Samuel, referring to this epoch, 'were forgotten, and days of peaceful success were calculated on. The prospect became ominously pleasing.' The persecuted Society at Morant Bay revived, and a good chapel was built there, with the help of friends in England. Bradnack extended his preaching-tours round the east of the island as far as the forsaken Manchioneal. He and his colleagues found access to a number of plantations hitherto closed to Methodist visits.

An attack upon the Mission was, however, in preparation, more insidious and difficult to combat than those it had surmounted. The Kingston Corporation was made the instrument of the new assault. Under the guise of municipal regulations it was possible to devise measures for keeping slaves away from Methodist meetings, with which the Imperial Government was not likely to interfere. Representations were made to the Town Council by influential citizens to the effect that 'meetings of the slaves and others were held at unseasonable hours; that people could not pass through the streets without being annoyed with singing and praying; that they were at it all night; that the orderly inhabitants could not rest in their beds without being disturbed; and that there was nothing but

<sup>1</sup> Bradnack is named Chairman of the Jamaica District in the Stations of 1806; for the present the title was nominal, Jamaica constituting but a single Circuit. The first Jamaican Synod was held in 1817, after the division of the Kingston Circuit



singing and praying in Kingston'—a glaring exaggeration,<sup>1</sup> but a striking tribute to the effect of Methodist preaching in this evil town. With but one dissentient voice, the Council resolved to prohibit the holding of religious meetings in Kingston and its precincts *before sunrise or after sunset*. This meant, and was intended to mean, the exclusion of the slaves, who for the most part were only at liberty to attend within the prohibited hours.

For a week the above proposal was under discussion. Bradnack and Knowlan petitioned against it, clearly showing the consequences and bearing of the proposed limitations. Their protest was received with contempt. The preamble of the Ordinance stated as its purpose to 'uphold the due, proper, and solemn exercise of religion,' which suffered from the irregular worship of the Methodist Negroes! The scorn of the councillors for the objects of the persecution transpires in the terms of their decree :

Whereas nothing can tend more to bring . . . the practice of religion into disrepute than the pretended preaching . . . by uneducated, illiterate, and ignorant persons and false enthusiasts,

and so on. The above preaching, 'to large numbers of persons of colour and Negroes of free condition, and slaves assembled' in all sorts of places of audience 'within this city and parish,' has 'increased,' they assert, 'to an alarming degree.' The Council therefore resolved not merely on the forbidding of public worship within the hours of dark ; it went on further to prohibit all 'preaching, teaching, the offering of public prayer, the singing of psalms' by unauthorized persons 'of any sect or denomination,' and in unlicensed places, within the bounds of Kingston.\* Penalties were imposed on the lines of the Act of 1802, which was virtually re-enacted as a matter of police-regulation for the borough, with some of its provisions enhanced in stringency. To give this measure greater authority, it was adopted by the House of Assembly and approved by the Lieutenant-Governor on November 28. being attached to the legislation set forth in the next paragraph.

The opportunity was taken by the House of Assembly to

<sup>1</sup> Drunken rowdyism nightly disturbed the Kingston streets, and was vastly noisier than Methodist revivalism.

<sup>2</sup> The authorization of Preachers and the licensing of preaching-places, the magistrates—practically one with the Town Council—held within their own control. The former case of Morant Bay showed how this regulation was likely to work.



consolidate its statutes respecting the treatment of slaves. Into the revised code a provision was introduced explicitly aimed at Methodism. Renewing the old dead-letter of the statute which directed masters and overseers to instruct their slaves 'in the principles of the Christian religion' and so 'fit them for baptism,'<sup>1</sup> the House added the clause:

Provided that the instruction of such slaves shall be confined to the doctrines of the Established Church in this island, and that no Methodist Missionary, or other sectary or Preacher, shall presume to instruct our slaves, or to receive them into their houses, chapels, or conventicles of any sort or description, under the penalty,' &c., &c.

These Acts of Council and Assembly amounted to the delivering over of Methodism, bound hand and foot, to the will of its enemies.

The storm thus falling upon the Mission as out of a clear sky is accounted for by the wave of alarm which swept over the West Indies in 1807, raised through the abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament. While this measure closed the African slave market to the planters, it portended the overthrow of slavery itself; it was a great stride along the path to Emancipation. The paroxysm of anger and fear which seized the slave-holders upon this event vented itself on all friends of the Negroes. Chief amongst these, and nearest at hand, were the Missionaries—a body of men obnoxious for other reasons besides. On them accordingly the white society of Jamaica let loose its wrath.

The pro-slavery animus against Methodism in the island was aggravated just then by the publication in the local newspapers of the resolution of the British Conference of 1807 against the holding of property in slaves by Methodist Ministers.<sup>2</sup> Several Missionaries had married West Indian ladies who owned slaves in their own right; in other cases, such possession devolved on the wife subsequently to her marriage. The wife's proprietorship entailed embarrassing legal responsibilities. In many of the islands manumission could only be effected by payment of a heavy fine, required as a guarantee against the pauperism

<sup>1</sup> This repetition, under the circumstances and in view of the known practice of nearly all the legislators, was hypocritical to the point of farce. The statute respecting the religious instruction of the slaves would appear to be reaffirmed only for the sake of the negative proviso!

<sup>2</sup> See *Minutes of Conference*, Vol. II., p. 402.

of the freed slave. Emancipation might mean destitution for the freedman ; sometimes it exposed the emancipated man or woman to the gravest moral peril. Domestic help was often unprocurable except in the form of slave-service.<sup>1</sup> The peremptory Conference resolution of 1807, insisting upon emancipation out of hand, raised delicate and anxious questions of conscience amongst the Missionaries, which occupy much of the correspondence between them and the home authorities at this period. The above regulation revealed the judgement of British Methodism respecting West Indian slavery ; it confirmed the suspicion of the planters that the Missionaries, in league with Wilberforce's party, were working for Abolition. In view of these consequences the Antigua Synod of 1808 declared ' the publication of the Minute in question to be impolitic, its execution impracticable, and its effect injurious.'<sup>2</sup>

Scarcely had the Kingston municipal ordinance passed into law when, on the strength of it, Knowlan and Gilgrass were arrested for carrying on a singing-class, in the house of the former, to a quarter past six in the evening—a few minutes after sundown ! For this trespass the latter was sentenced to a month's confinement in gaol ; Knowlan's penalty was remitted on account of his state of health. The impenitent Gilgrass sang and prayed with the debtors in the prison, who came round him begging for a sermon. On hearing of this, next day the magistrates stopped the pious exercise. Released in a fortnight, to his distress Gilgrass found his chapel closed. The stewards reported that it was impossible to distinguish and keep out the slaves, who could not understand their exclusion ; for every slave entering the chapel, those responsible

<sup>1</sup> It was usual for householders not possessing slaves of their own, who required domestic help, to hire the service of slaves belonging to their neighbours. Sometimes slaves in privileged positions would hire, or even purchase, slaves to wait upon them. When the Moravian Missionary at St. Thomas, about this time, fell ill and needed attendance, the slaves of his congregation clubbed together to buy a slave for his convenience ! In the given state of society it was hardly possible to escape implication in the system at one point or another.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Turner, the Chairman of that District at the time, was one of the Missionaries implicated. He considers ' the system of slavery thoroughly bad,' but holds (writing to Coke) ' that general indiscriminate emancipation would be worse.' He wants to know ' on what grounds slaves can be prohibited to Preachers and allowed to members ! ' (The question of excluding slave-owners from the Church had never been raised.) He says that the mistake ( ' if mistake it be ' ) of marrying wives who own slaves is one that cannot be rectified at a stroke. In his own case, the property is settled on his wife and is out of his disposal. If the rule be pressed, he must be suspended from his ministry. This difficulty continued in the West Indies up to the time of Emancipation. Several Missionaries were ' dropped,' including one or two valuable men, because they could not extricate themselves from family entanglement in slavery.

were liable to a heavy fine. The poor creatures 'crowded about the doors with looks of deep anguish, exclaiming : " Massa, me no go to heaven now ! " ; " White man keep black man fro' serving God ! " ; " Black man got no soul ! " ; " Nobody fu' teach black man now ! " ' To resume public worship under such conditions was impracticable.

A fourth Missionary, John Wiggins, at this juncture reached Kingston ; the four were summoned before the magistrates, who warned them against preaching without a licence. They were all licensed, they declared, according to the laws of England. ' The laws of England are nothing to the magistrates of Jamaica,' was the retort. Knowlan thereupon moved for the granting of a licence. ' Indeed you will not get one,' said the Chairman of the Bench. Though better manned than ever before, the Mission was nonplussed. Gilgrass writes to Dr. Coke :

If we can have no redress from home, we must leave the island ; but I hope for better things. . . . At present I cannot read in the family, or pray, without being served worse than a pickpocket ; and that by white men who are called ' gentlemen.' We dare meet no more Classes, the corporate body (the Corporation) having given orders to the police-officer that if he can discover us (at our missionary duties), either by night or day, he is immediately to take us down to that offensive prison, ' the cage ' ; and that all the punishment in their power shall be inflicted. Nothing appears to satisfy them but our banishment.

Bradnack and Wiggins applied at the January Quarter Sessions for licence to preach ; they met with the same refusal as Knowlan from the town magistrates. The certificate of the Lord Mayor of London, they were told, and the English Act of Toleration, were nothing to Jamaica ! Their respectful petition to the Governor of the island was ignored.

The only resource left to the downtrodden Methodists was an appeal to the Throne. This appeal, made in due form by a memorial from the Committee of Privileges of the British Conference, and supported by the Committee of Deputies of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters, was laid before the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade and Plantations ; it showed that by the legislation in question ' about 400,000 slaves were effectually excluded from all public worship—a measure of persecution unexampled in the Christian world ' ; the religious liberties of British subjects in

all quarters of the Empire were at stake in this remonstrance. On April 26, 1809, the decision was given annulling the second persecuting Act, after it had been in operation seventeen months. Not till the following August was the repeal published at Kingston.

The municipal regulation limiting the hours of worship in Kingston was unaffected by the disallowance of the slave-law of 1807 ; and when the Missionaries, on the publication of the Royal pronouncement, applied to the Kingston Council for leave to reopen the chapel, subject to the aforesaid limitation, permission was refused. In the course of next year the House of Assembly passed a new disabling Act, making the process of obtaining licences, both for Preachers to the Negroes and for preaching-places, more difficult and expensive, and rendering licences when obtained liable to forfeiture on complaint made of the unfitness of the licensed person—provisions which put fresh weapons into the persecutors' hands.<sup>1</sup> The Kingston Chapel remained closed ; it was leased for temporary occupation to the Free School of the town.

While the Kingston Society was thus overwhelmed by trouble from without, it was torn with internal conflict. The calm temper and patient dignity of William Fish were missed at this crisis. His successors were zealous and clever men, but neither Bradnack nor Gilgrass excelled in discretion, and the two did not always see eye to eye. Knowlan, the most judicious of the staff, fell dangerously ill, and quitted the scene for Nova Scotia. The root of the mischief is disclosed by a letter to Dr. Coke from his old friend Mrs. Mary Ann Smith, dated August, 1807, which breathes a motherly spirit. She describes the Kingston Society as happy and flourishing from the time of 'the abolition of the cruel law' of 1802, until excitement and division of opinion were caused by the conversion of 'some young girls of colour. These poor creatures,' she says, 'had been bred up by wicked mothers to expect nothing better than to live in prostitution with white men.' On their joining the Methodist Society, most of the young women were turned out of their homes. Bradnack, from the purest motives (as Mrs. Smith testifies), took a marked interest in the unfortunates ; they came to his house, and he was seen

<sup>1</sup> In order to evade the abrogatory power of the home Government, this statute, passed in November, 1810, was to lapse at the end of the following year—when, if thought necessary, it could be easily renewed.



in their company. He was a single man in the prime of life, and the worst construction was put upon his sympathy by those ready to think evil. Malicious tongues spoke of the Preacher's house as 'Bradnack's seraglio'.<sup>1</sup> The ugly rumour was taken up by two or three Leaders of the Society, who had voted against the admission of the penitents; they slandered Bradnack grossly, and actually held a meeting to depose him! On the return of his colleagues from the country, the Ministers unitedly proceeded against the usurping Class-leaders and expelled them from the Society.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Smith, who knew all the parties concerned, vouches in the strongest way for Bradnack's innocence, as well as for the laboriousness and fidelity of his ministry. She had nursed him through several illnesses, and had found in him 'the utmost delicacy of mind and an unfailing piety.' She deplores the bitter spirit shown by a section of the Society toward the rescued Magdalenes and the pastor who befriended them. These persons for months past had made the Leaders' Meeting, 'formerly peaceable and happy,' a kind of bear-garden; when put on trial in their turn, 'their rage was ungovernable.'

The judgement expressed in Mother Smith's letter was borne out in the subsequent investigations made by Bradnack's brethren. He was found guilty of indiscretion and intemperate language, but of nothing worse; no stain attached to his character amongst decent people in Kingston. He returned home in 1808, and served with distinction for many years thereafter in the English ministry. Gilgrass was removed to St. Christopher in the same year; Knowlan was also departing; the three Missionaries concerned in the scandal all quitted Jamaica. The quarrel within the Society was still raging when the storm of 1807 burst upon it.

There remained on the field John Wiggins—only a probationer as yet, though thirty-one years of age. George Johnston, whose probation had just expired, was brought from Grenada to take the superintendency. These two men were wise beyond their years. They were both of the type of William Fish—humble, faithful shepherds of Christ's flock;

<sup>1</sup> Some of the details in this account are drawn from Johnston's subsequent report.

<sup>2</sup> Bradnack writes to Dr. Coke in October, reporting the storm to be over. Only twenty members, he says, have left the Society following the condemned leaders, while forty new members have been since received. He was too sanguine in thinking the trouble at an end.



they worked in hearty fellowship. To Wiggins especially, who remained eight years on the island, the salvation of Methodism in Jamaica must be ascribed. Johnston's first duty was to report to Dr. Coke on the condition of the Circuit. He sends home as dark a picture as could well be imagined. He shrinks from the Superintendent's office, pleading his defective piety and his poor education. Of the latter disadvantage his early letters bear evidence, but the deficiency was diligently repaired ; in other respects he was exceptionally competent. Spite of all, he hopes that he may succeed in 'pulling the Society together.' Fortunately he had a wife who went far to double his usefulness. Gilgrass, on the point of departure, writes dolefully of 'this wicked and miserable island. . . . Poor sufferer !' he says, referring to Johnston, who has just arrived, 'my soul is much concerned for him and his wife. . . . The Church is almost ruined. The devil is roaring aloud among us ! . . . Mr. Knowlan is near death.'

A year later Johnston is found almost as despondent as on his arrival. The chapel is still closed ; preaching is forbidden. The Society-classes, however, are meeting again in Kingston ; the Church is recovering ; Ministers and people walk in love with each other. He begs for a Station in which he will be allowed to open his mouth again ; thinks another type of Minister might conciliate the townsfolk. A little later he forwards to Hatton Garden an interesting letter from a Kingston gentleman, a well-wisher to the Methodists, who suggests that their Missionaries have acted unwisely in treating the Negroes as social equals—by shaking hands with them, calling them 'Brother' and 'Sister' and the like. This familiarity, in his opinion, has done a two-fold harm, prejudicing the Whites and puffing up the Blacks ! Johnston endorses, to some extent, the views of this letter, and judges that his predecessors had compromised their dignity. He was relieved of his painful charge in 1811, but returned to the Jamaica District six years later, to preside over it in happier times. There this saint of God finished his earthly course on October 5, 1821, at Morant Bay.

Few men [his obituary states] have died in our West India Missions so greatly lamented as this excellent and laborious servant of God, whose praise in the Gospel is in all the Churches in that part of the globe.

Johnston had every one's good opinion—except his own ; his colleagues refer to him with a peculiar reverence of affection.

On Johnston's withdrawal, Wiggins remained alone to 'hold the fort' at Kingston. No more could be done for the present. No one quarrelled with this exemplary Minister ; his invincible kindness disarmed opponents, his transparent goodness stopped the mouths of revilers ; but the Kingston Corporation and magistrates held to their policy of suppression. When in August, 1812, the Parade Chapel was released from occupation by the Free School, the Minister reopened the building on the next Sunday and preached in the afternoon to a thousand people. On Monday morning he was summoned before the magistrates, who in opprobrious language sentenced him to a month's imprisonment in the common gaol. They had gone too far ; the tide of public feeling turned ; a sudden and powerful reaction in favour of the Methodist Preacher set in. On coming out of prison, Wiggins received friendly greetings on all sides. A concurrence of hurricane and earthquake in the following autumn shook the conscience of Kingston. The people flocked to the prayer-meetings that were called ; and though public preaching was still barred in the city,<sup>1</sup> the man of God had his hands full in dealing with seekers of salvation. In April, 1813, he reports the Society, which had remained for fifteen years past at about the same level of 600, increased to 1,723 !

The growth of the people in genuine piety and holy zeal is [he thinks] in proportion to their numbers. We have upwards of fifty prayer-meetings, in which we sing as well as pray, notwithstanding we are not yet suffered to preach in the chapel. However, we feel that God is with us.

The Missionary Committee, on this welcome tidings, resolved to strengthen the Jamaica staff. John Davies, landing early in 1814, was the first of the reinforcements to arrive. On applying at Quarter Sessions, Davies was allowed to qualify as Preacher—by this time the magistrates were a little ashamed of their intolerance—but the veto against Wiggins remained in force. The decision of the Kingston Court in Davies' case was heralded through the island as the dawn of a new day of religious freedom ; for seven dreary years the Methodist chapel had been shut up. The jubilation of its reopening,

<sup>1</sup> The Morant Bay Chapel had been reopened in 1810.

which took place on July 3, was exchanged for wailing when three months later the excellent young Missionary—the only licensed Methodist Preacher in the island—fell a victim to fever. His death closed the chapel again. A few weeks after this sad event John Shipman arrived from England—a Minister in full standing, and bringing a wife with him. His application to the Town Council and Quarter Sessions were met with postponement and evasions ; not until November of the following year did Shipman obtain licence to preach within the borough. A majority of the magistrates still avowed themselves opposed to the instruction of the slaves. Shipman was obliged to promise that no public service should be held after dark, nor on week-days, otherwise than at the times of worship at the parish church. The grudging consent was received, however, with great thankfulness, and worship was resumed in Kingston Chapel on December 3, 1815, never to cease again. Mrs. Smith, the revered mother of the Society, formally opened the gates of the House of God on that day, amid a touching demonstration of devout gratitude and revived hope. From this date we hear little of any difficulty about licensing and registration in Kingston.

Outside as well as inside of the city the Society was growing apace. The Circuit contained 2,700 members,<sup>1</sup> with four Ministers. On Wiggins' advice it was decided to divide it into four sections, named in the Stations of 1816 as *Kingston*, *Spanish Town*, *Morant Bay*, and *Bove Rock*.<sup>2</sup> Jamaica was restored to 'District' status, with John Wiggins for its Chairman. He was delighted to give place to George Johnston,<sup>3</sup> who returned to Jamaica in the following year, when the staff received a further addition and the four Circuits became five. Methodism advanced, in city and country, by leaps and bounds ; the block put in its way had acted like a dam, multiplying the momentum of the stream when at length it found passage. Hammet's old chapel was enlarged, but even so proved far too small ; in the course of the year 1817 the building of a second sanctuary, upon an excellent site,

<sup>1</sup> In the published returns for 1815 there are reported for Jamaica 1,678 *black* members of Society, and only 22 *whites* !

<sup>2</sup> This means *Above Rock*, an earlier name for the Station afterwards called *Grateful Hill*, which stood high up in the mountains on the north-western road from Kingston.

<sup>3</sup> Referring to Johnston the humble-minded, Wiggins says : ' In comparison of him we are all but children in point of character, piety, and talents for the ministry.'

was initiated. This undertaking was carried out with the utmost zeal, under many signs of public favour. So liberal were the contributions made that within two years of its erection Wesley Chapel (as the new house was named) was clear of debt. George Johnston opened it before the end of 1818; the two buildings were filled to overflowing. The magistrates were amazed when the new chapel was proposed for registration. 'How far are these people to spread? How high are they to rise?' asked one of them, in unconcealed dismay. The Synod of 1819 tabulated a membership of above 3,000 in Kingston Circuit, and only a few hundred less in that of Morant Bay, while for the whole island 6,540 were reported—a nearly twelvefold multiplication in eight years. Formerly far in the rear, this West Indian District now stood second only to that of Antigua in the size of its constituency. John Wiggins, in failing health, retired to his native Ireland in 1818; there he was obliged to 'sit down' for eight years, afterwards resuming active service. He died in 1858, at a ripe old age. Before he left Jamaica the day of vindication had come for his cheerful, gentle patience and indomitable faith.

The battle for religious liberty was won in Kingston, and the Methodist people, however much exposed to private hostility, had little reason henceforward to complain of their treatment by the civic authorities. When the next effort in building was made, within four years of the erection of Wesley Chapel, it was determined to replace it by a larger edifice capable of holding 2,000 worshippers. Robert Young, then entering upon his memorable ministry, tells how he and his colleague waited on the members of the Kingston Corporation—on Jewish traders, on Roman Catholics as well as Protestants—and in almost every instance received subscriptions in money and expressions of goodwill. Some who had been the bitterest opponents of the Methodist cause were wishful to make amends; 'thus,' says he, 'prejudice is melting away.' 'All parties,' writes Samuel, 'vied with each other in pushing forward' the enterprise. Methodism in Kingston had passed out of winter into summer! Our Church in the island had to undergo the fiercest persecution in subsequent years; but this came from the planters, no longer from the citizens. By the end of 1823, when the new Wesley Chapel was opened, close upon 4,000 Church members were enrolled



in Kingston Circuit and above 9,000 in the District—an advance of 40 per cent. realized within four years. More than half the Kingston Society were slaves; the remainder were drawn chiefly from the free Negroes and coloured people. Of white Church members, less than 60 were found in the whole Circuit.

The missionary staff of the Kingston Circuit—reduced to narrow geographical limits by the severance from it of Spanish Town in the west, Morant Bay in the east, and Grateful Hill in the north—underwent many changes during these years of expansion. George Johnston ruled until his death in 1821—a better or wiser Chairman few Methodist Districts at home or abroad have ever boasted. He was succeeded in office by John Shipman, Wiggins' colleague at the turn of the tide in Kingston, whose preaching filled the Parade Chapel on its reopening. His Superintendent pronounced Shipman on arrival 'a great acquisition'; so he proved in the ten years of his labour up and down the District, everywhere enlarging his Circuits and building up the Church of God—a careful and thoroughly devoted pastor, a plain, searching Preacher, an estimable, sensible, lovable man—lost to the West Indies through the unhappy 'Jamaica Resolutions' of 1824. William Ratcliffe, too, whose missionary course, suddenly terminated in middle life, covered twelve years (1815-27), was a great acquisition to Jamaica. Ratcliffe's work was mainly done in the country; a single year (1817-18) he spent, very usefully, in Kingston. James Horne, an Irishman by birth and a soldier in his youth, entered the field in 1817, and served most efficiently at Kingston through the fruitful years of 1819-22. Horne gave the strength of his days to the West Indies, 'travelling' in the islands for thirty-five years, where he endured manifold trial and achieved almost uniform success, in Circuit after Circuit witnessing 'continuous and permanent revival.' Along with Shipman, Horne was implicated in the Jamaica Resolutions; though sorely troubled at the censures this well-intended manifesto brought upon its authors, he remained on the Mission Field to make full proof of his ministry. His closing days were spent in Bermuda, where he died in 1856.

Peter Duncan, a Scotchman by birth, brought up at the feet of Richard Watson, was James Horne's probationer colleague at Kingston in 1820. Duncan ranked with the foremost Missionaries of the West Indies; he stood in the front line of the

battle with the reactionary forces of Jamaica, bearing himself with the calmest courage. Scarcely any man in the island did more at that critical time 'to meliorate the condition of the slaves . . . or to shame the brutality of their oppressors.' Worn down by the strain and suffering thus experienced, Duncan returned to England in 1832 before the hour of victory ; but his testimony, delivered both on the public platform and in the Parliamentary Committee-room, was powerfully convincing. He published a memoir upon the subject,<sup>1</sup> which proved timely and serviceable. A man born for days of conflict, Duncan played his part in the Connexional agitations of subsequent years at home with conspicuous fidelity and prudence. He died in 1862, a veteran soldier of Christ Jesus. Peter Duncan was reckoned a superior Methodist theologian ; he combined in striking fashion, with the exactness and thoroughness of the student, brotherly geniality and conversational aptitude and charm.

Isaac Whitehouse almost rivalled Horne by his thirty years' West Indian ministry, broken, however, by an interval of retirement to England due to sickness. Joining the staff of the Jamaica District in 1823, he spent there the first thirteen years of his missionary life, during five of which he was stationed at Kingston (1829-34). Of William Binning, who travelled from 1817-25 in Jamaica and lived thereafter to render many years' service in the home ranks, it is said that 'his preaching, like his character, was distinguished by simplicity, faithfulness, and energy ; and God honoured his labours with success.' The gifted Robert Young, whose name shines on several Methodist missionary fields, commenced his ministry in Jamaica at this epoch. After six years of strenuous and most useful labour, his wife's health drove him to seek a cooler clime in Nova Scotia. The course of other Ministers was too brief to allow them to leave their impress upon the history of the Mission. Taking them all in all, the labourers in and around Kingston from the time of the ceasing of the great persecution were a group of exceptionally strong men and thorough Methodist Missionaries. Under their hands the District thrived and grew marvellously ; the Mission was lifted to its permanent place of influence, and gathered the forces enabling it for the struggle with slavery which culminated in the Emancipation of 1834.

<sup>1</sup> *A Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica, with occasional remarks on the State of Society in that Colony* (1849). Duncan's narrative is the best written of all the historical memoirs of this period relating to the West Indies.

From 1818 onwards Kingston Methodism entered upon conditions of favour and prosperity. The time of sunshine, according to the old fable, brought dangers more to be dreaded than those of storm. The rich traders of Kingston had helped forward the building of Wesley Chapel ; leading citizens and professional men became seat-holders there and learned to appreciate Methodist preaching. Despite the prejudice inveterate amongst the landed proprietors, an increasing number of these up and down the island approved the missioning of their slaves. The West Indian planter, with all his faults, was proverbially hospitable ; he could not see the Missionary coming and going amongst his people without offering some polite attention and entertainment. In most cases he found his visitor good company, and grew to respect and like him. Friendships sprang up in this way, by which both parties were influenced. Here and there amongst the proprietors a genuine Christian spirit and an intelligent sympathy with the Missionary's aims were manifested. A warm evangelical faith might even reconcile itself with the stout maintenance of negro slavery ; such was the case with thousands of earnest Methodists in the Southern United States. Under humane masters the Negroes were kindly cared for, and slavery was robbed of its darkest features ; the slaves in such establishments appeared for the most part contented, and their life not unhappy. ' There is a soul of goodness in things evil.' Several of the Missionaries married into West Indian families ; these especially came to appreciate the colonial point of view, and discovered that slavery was not always so bad as it had been painted. From these and the like causes the minds of Missionaries in some instances underwent a reaction. It was only fair (some of them thought) to protest against the sweeping denunciations of the system they had heard at home ; not without a show of reason did they doubt the wisdom of the plans of wholesale, sudden emancipation contemplated by political reformers.

At the same time apprehension on the subject was deepened in the colony through British Parliamentary discussion. Canning's resolutions of 1823, which committed the House of Commons to the principle of Abolition, excited violent alarm. The recent servile insurrection in Demerara, and the treatment of Missionaries there, inflamed public feeling, particularly in Jamaica, where the planters were most sensitive. Voices were

raised declaring the Dissenting Preachers to be the root of the chronic negro troubles ; they were, it was said, agents of the Anti-slavery Society in England, and must be expelled in the interests of public safety. At Kingston a Missionary who had resided for some time in the island found his application for a licence to preach opposed ; two such applications in the parish of St. Ann's were peremptorily refused. These were disquieting symptoms. A petition just then presented to the Jamaica Legislature by the free Negroes and coloured people, asking for an extension of civil rights, was ascribed (quite mistakenly) to missionary instigation. Actuated by the fears thus aroused, the House of Assembly passed a resolution authorizing the Governor to remove from the island suspected persons—a suggestion aimed, as the Missionaries had good reason to suppose, against themselves. Their work, now prosperous throughout the island and signally owned of God, was in danger of arrest. There was no time for concerted measures, and for seeking advice from head quarters in London.<sup>1</sup>

In this threatening emergency, four of the ten Methodist Missionaries on the island met in Kingston, on September 6, to consider the situation. Taking counsel together, they drafted a series of resolutions framed with the purpose of allaying suspicion and of setting themselves right with public opinion in the colony. They sent round the proposed statement to their brethren for consideration. Of the six other Missionaries, three entirely dissented ; the rest expressed a partial and qualified approval. By some accident the unrevised resolutions<sup>2</sup> found their way into the columns of a West Indian paper, and thence into the English prints. The document was read in England as an apology for slavery, and provoked a lively resentment, both outside and inside of Methodism.<sup>3</sup> Indignant letters

<sup>1</sup> Aware of what was stirring in the minds of the Missionaries, Richard Watson had, however, earlier in the year, addressed to them an admirable letter, in which he charged them not to 'lose their Christian and English feeling on the subject of slavery' and not to 'acquire the prejudices of caste and colour.' On the other hand, he cautioned them against discussing this and kindred topics in West Indian circles, and reminded them that it was their part 'to inculcate good order, peace, and charity, morality and true religion, amongst all classes.' 'You,' he writes, 'have given up yourselves to be employed entirely and altogether in making society as it there (in the W.I.) exists better in morals and knowledge, on the foundation of both morals and religion.'

<sup>2</sup> Duncan declares that the particular resolution which gave most offence at home was not in the series drafted by the four primary authors, but came from another hand. He also thinks it likely that the appearance of this exculpation in Jamaica saved the Missionaries from banishment.

<sup>3</sup> In the said resolutions the four Missionaries, professing to speak for 'the Wesleyan Body,' asserted their belief 'that Christianity does not interfere with the



poured in upon the Mission House, intimating the belief of the writers that the Missionaries had been seduced by the slaveholders, and in some instances threatening withdrawal of subscriptions to the Society! There was exaggeration and needless passion in the outcry; but the Missionary Committee recognized that occasion had been given for remonstrance, and felt bound to vindicate itself in the matter. Its judgement was expressed by a well-weighed deliverance, in which the position of the Methodist Church toward colonial slavery was declared, while the Missionaries were cleared from the imputations made against them in the colonies of meddling with civil questions and stirring up negro disaffection. At the same time, the authors of the Jamaica Resolutions were blamed for the irregular course they had taken, and for some of the sentiments they appeared to adopt. Copies of the Committee's circular were forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and to the Governor of Jamaica. The chief offenders were recalled from the field, one of them (Shipman) being Chairman of the Jamaica District. These two brethren, it seems, as early as August of that year, before the appearance of the obnoxious resolutions, had been under censure for manifestations in the same direction. The incident passed over with little further trouble; indeed, this explosion served to clear the air. To all fair-minded men it was evident that, on the one hand, the Methodist Church was in principle wholly against the maintenance of slavery; and that, on the other hand, its West Indian Missionaries were clear of political agitation on the subject, and taught the Negroes nothing but what made for diligent service to their masters.

At the end of the year 1824 the Missionary Secretaries addressed to the Jamaica Synod a letter of counsel touching several other matters on which the fathers in London thought admonition needful:

civil condition of slaves, as slavery is established and regulated by the laws of the British West Indies.' This looked like an approval of the *status quo*, especially when read in connexion with the repudiation of the designs of 'Emancipationists and Abolitionists' which followed in the context. 'If it was intended,' the London Committee say in their circular, 'as a declaration that the system of slavery, "as established in the West Indies" or anywhere else, is not inconsistent with Christianity, the Committee and "the Wesleyan Body" hold no such opinion. . . . They hold it to be the duty of every Christian Government to bring the practice of slavery to an end as soon as can be done prudently, safely, and with a just consideration of the interests of all parties concerned; and that the degradation of men merely on account of their colour, and the holding of human beings in interminable bondage, are wholly inconsistent with Christianity.' The reflections cast in the 'Resolutions' on the advocates of Abolition in England are rebuked in language of dignified severity. This great State Paper of the Wesleyan Missionary Society unmistakably comes from the master hand of Richard Watson.

(1) The possibility of making Church membership cheap by hasty or too easy admission.

(2) The danger lest 'Obeah' heathenism should infiltrate into the Church.

(3) The duty of treating the clergy with respect, despite the hostility and injustice they exhibited towards Methodism.

(4) The necessity for abstinence from agitation on political and social questions, from newspaper controversy in particular. The rapid development taking place in West Indian Methodism and the unscrupulous campaign carried on against it, together with the growing interest and warmth of feeling manifested by the mother country in regard to slavery and other colonial questions, had excited a ferment amongst the able young Missionaries on the field unfavourable to the single-minded pursuit of their work.

The persecuting temper reawakened in 1823 did not die down in the Jamaica Legislature. In 1826 the Code of Slave-laws was once more revised; new clauses were framed forbidding the holding of religious services by 'sectarian Ministers or other teachers' before sunrise or after sunset. A proviso was inserted excepting Presbyterians,<sup>1</sup> Roman Catholics, and Jews from the operation of this rule, leaving its application specifically to Baptists, Moravians, and Methodists. A fine was also imposed on religious teachers who should 'receive money, or other chattel whatsoever, from any slave, or slaves, insomuch as ample provision was furnished, by public and private means, for their religious instruction.' Effrontery could hardly go farther than the last stipulation, which was designed to stop Methodist collections! The above Act was signed by the Governor of the colony; but the Missionaries resolved to disregard it, being sure of support from England in doing so. It was never put in force.

A 'Sectarian Committee' (i.e. a Committee to watch the sectaries) was appointed, which set about to gather material for a case against the Dissenters. From its labours there issued a report, laid before the House of Assembly in 1828, setting forth how the Missionaries, on various pretences and by improper means, extorted money from their congregations; how they

<sup>1</sup> The favour shown to the Presbyterians by the ascendancy-party in Jamaica at this period was chiefly due to the activity of a certain Minister of the Established Church of Scotland in Kingston, to whose pen some of the most violent diatribes against 'the Sectarians' and the Abolitionists were traced.

gained ascendancy over the negro mind by revolutionary teaching about 'equality and the rights of man'; how they preached sedition, and cast odium on the public authorities. By these means, it was asserted, they reduced the slaves to abject poverty and a state of restless discontent, out of which resulted manifold injury to property and danger for the civil peace of the island. The bulk of the evidence compiled in this report was worthless. Those incriminated were allowed no opportunity of cross-examination or reply. The Committee advised drastic measures of restraint, including the re-enactment and strict enforcement of the Slave-law of 1826. The new Governor, Sir John Keane, recognizing the injustice of the procedure and the certainty that it would be disallowed by the Government at home, refused his assent to the resolutions to the above effect, which were carried in the House of Assembly.

The matter was not allowed to rest there. In view of the abominable nature of much of the evidence appearing in the report on which the Legislature had based its abortive legislation, the Baptist and Wesleyan Missionaries laid against certain of the witnesses the charge of having been bribed to perjure themselves. John Barry, who wielded a keen and effective pen, exposed in the columns of a friendly Jamaica newspaper the fictitious nature of the testimony accepted by the Sectarian Committee, while another island journal took up their cause on its own account in outspoken fashion. A few months later Barry was prosecuted for libel, with a claim for heavy damages, by the editor of the *Courant*, Mr. A. H. Beaumont, a veritable Goliath of the press.<sup>1</sup> Each party pleaded his own case before the Supreme Court, and all Kingston crowded to the trial, which resulted, after a powerful speech of vindication by the defendant, in an emphatic verdict of acquittal. This judgement was received with immense satisfaction; for the time the legislative campaign against Methodism was brought to an end.

The war, however, was far from being over. As the movement for Abolition advanced in England, the partisans of slavery grew enraged and recklessly defiant in Jamaica. The House of Assembly rang with fiery and sometimes seditious speeches; the pro-slavery press poured out vituperation and calumny. The effervescence was raised to its height by the

<sup>1</sup> The prosecution arose out of an encounter of the two men at a Missionary Meeting in Spanish Town, when the editor made an offensive interruption.

slave insurrection which broke out in the north-west of the island late in the year 1831. This rising was confined to a narrow area, and was crushed with no great difficulty ; but its suppression was marked by panic amongst the white people, and by wanton bloodshed on the part of the local magistrates and militia. The guilt of the calamity, to be sure, was laid at the door of the Missionaries. The editor of the *Cornwall Courier* proposed that advantage should be taken of the proclamation of martial law to execute these arch-criminals out of hand. ' Shooting,' this gentleman observed, ' is a death too honourable ' for them ! ' There are fine *hanging woods* in Trelawney, and we sincerely hope that the bodies of all the Methodist Preachers who may be convicted of sedition may diversify the scene ! ' The House of Assembly appointed its Committee of Inquiry, which, without a shred of tenable evidence, reported the Missionaries as instigators of the rebellion.

Under the influence of such sentiments as those quoted above, ' The Colonial Church Union ' was started at St. Ann's Bay in January, 1832, avowing as one of its principal aims ' the expulsion of all sectarian Missionaries ' from the island. This confederacy spread far and wide among the planters, holding the districts where it prevailed under a reign of terror ; its members stopped short of no threat or outrage that might serve to rid them of the Dissenters. The doings of the Church Unionists in the rural districts will be described in the next chapter. Kingston declined to take part with them. Whilst scores of chapels were destroyed in the country, the attempts made to fire those of the capital were foiled. The friends of Methodism in the city stood forward manfully in its defence ; the Mayor issued a proclamation against disturbers of the peace, and the civic officers did their duty well. About the end of July in this critical year the newly appointed Governor, the Earl of Mulgrave, entered upon office. He put down with a firm hand the anarchism of the Church Union, and insisted upon compensation being made for the property destroyed through its action. By the enlargement of the narrow electorate it was attempted to break down the dominance of the planter-oligarchy in the Legislature.<sup>1</sup> The way was prepared for Emancipation.

<sup>1</sup> At the same time the colour distinction was removed by law in the selection of juries in Jamaica. But the landowners recovered the control of the House of Assembly.



Through the years of ceaseless obloquy and harassment which preceded the Act of Emancipation (1824-33), 'the word of the Lord' continued to 'have free course' in Kingston and in most other parts of the island. The Methodist Church-membership of the city circuit in 1824 mustered just under 4,000; in 1832, when the one Circuit had become two, it stood at nearly 4,500. The corresponding figure for the whole District rose in the same period from 9,000 to something short of 13,000. Sixteen Missionaries now replaced the ten of the earlier date, five being allotted to the Kingston Circuits manned nine years before by two only. A third spacious sanctuary<sup>1</sup>—the Ebenezer Chapel—had been built by the Kingston Methodists; it was opened in October, 1827, when a concourse of 8,000 people was gathered—the largest public assembly ever witnessed in Jamaica.

In the autumn of 1828 the Kingston Church was plunged into mourning by the successive deaths, at five weeks' interval, of a couple of young Missionaries, Thomas Charles Morgan and Mark Harrison—both exceptionally promising and endeared to the people. Between these two bereavements the wife of Thomas Murray, an older Kingston Missionary, was taken from him. 'In death oft' was the experience of those who laboured on this fever-swept island. The same year saw the Auxiliary Missionary Society for Jamaica inaugurated in Kingston. Its first annual report recorded contributions to the parent Society to the amount of £625. Another gratifying sign of progress was the opening at Kingston of the first Wesleyan Day School in the island, the establishment of which was aided by a society of London ladies for promoting Christian knowledge, who undertook the cost of educating twenty slave children. Hitherto we have heard nothing of the setting up of missionary schools in the West Indies. Our Society, like others, in the early times realized imperfectly the importance of this arm of the service, and the vital office of education in Missions to the heathen. When attempts were made, it proved impossible to gather the negro children into school on any large scale while the population remained in slavery.

<sup>1</sup> The ordinary congregations in the two Kingston Chapels before the erection of the third numbered not less than 2,500 worshippers.

## IV

### THE STRUGGLE IN JAMAICA

#### (2) THE COUNTRY

Renewed Activities in Jamaica—The Morant Bay Circuit—Other Circuits—The Martyrdom of Lamont—Church Unionists and Henry Bleby—Montego Bay—The Earl of Mulgrave—Stephen Drew—The Persecution of Joseph Grimsdall—The Case of Isaac Whitehouse—Continued Persecution—Better Days—Development of Circuit Work—Rebellion and Samuel Sharpe—A Marvellous Report—The Missionaries' Reply.

WE have carried the story of the Mission in Kingston to the era of Emancipation; let us trace its work in other parts of the island. In 1816, when John Wiggins divided the Kingston Circuit into four, the expansion began. While the Mission for years did little more than maintain its footing in Spanish Town,<sup>1</sup> at Morant Bay on the eastern side it threw out a vigorous shoot. Here a chapel was built under Bradnack's superintendency, but evangelistic work for some time ceased through persecution, though the Society persisted. At Montego Bay in the west the hopeful beginning made by William Fish in 1797 had been stopped, and the Society he had formed melted away in the fire of persecution. For wellnigh twenty years thereafter operations were almost confined to Kingston and the country eastwards.

In MORANT BAY first the moderating of the storm<sup>2</sup> gave the Mission opportunity to resume its activities. The preaching of Bradnack and Knowlan made a lasting impression here. In January, 1807, Bradnack reports 155 members in the Morant Bay Society. 'The blessed work of God,' he writes, 'not only

<sup>1</sup> The proportion of slaves to free people in the Spanish Town Society, as at Kingston, was much less than in country Circuits. Spanish Town being the head quarters of Government, the Mission regularly posted there one of its strongest men. The town congregation, if not very large, was of peculiar importance.

<sup>2</sup> The leading persecutor, who was head of the Magistracy (Custos) for the parish of St. Thomas-in-the-East, the extensive District in which Morant Bay and Manchioneal both lie, had recently died.

spreads wider, but it sinks deeper in the hearts of our members.' Three months later a chapel was opened by James Knowlan, built by the labours and contributions of the people on the spot. A circle of energetic and devoted Methodists was gathered in the neighbourhood, amongst whom the negro freedman, John Williams, stood foremost.

For some time a Local Preacher named William White<sup>1</sup> shepherded the Society at Morant Bay, until in 1815 the Kingston Superintendent had a colleague to spare for the country work. John Burgar was the first Minister of the new Circuit, which embraced a number of out-stations and contained above 800 Church members. Burgar won favour with all classes of the people; even the proprietors relaxed their hostility. One day, however, a ticket of membership belonging to a slave fell under the eye of a certain Guardian of the Peace. This ticket bore the alarming legend: 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force'—a watchword, he surmised, of imminent insurrection! Hurriedly the magistrates and vestrymen were summoned; the Methodist Preacher was called up before them. With no small difficulty his explanation was accepted and the crisis passed; he was dismissed with an admonition from the Custos<sup>2</sup> 'to preach the necessity of good works, but to say nothing about faith; for that was dangerous doctrine for the Negroes!' In a few months Burgar was carried off by yellow fever, to the bitter grief of his people. A unique tribute was paid to this excellent man, the parish vestry, at their first meeting after his death, voting the gift of £100 to his widow in token of the esteem of the community for her deceased husband.

The Morant Bay Circuit soon stretched over the towns and chief villages in the east of the island, including Manchioneal, Bath, Pomfret (near the Yallahs), and Port Antonio. Horne and Underhill, who travelled here together in 1819, promoted its extension with the utmost energy. The Church membership numbered 1,500 in the earliest separate return (for the year 1816).

In 1824 on the above area there appear the two Circuits of

<sup>1</sup> White emigrated from England as a child, with his parents, and was brought up in the West Indies. The service he rendered at Morant Bay led to his entering the ministry, in which he acquitted himself very worthily, until his death in the wreck of the *Maria* in 1826.

<sup>2</sup> The Custos of a Jamaica parish held a position resembling that of the Lord Lieutenant of an English county.

*Bath* and *Morant Bay*, containing a total membership of 3,608. Bath—so named from its medicinal springs—is an inland town occupying a delightful situation at the foot of the Blue Mountains, ten miles north-eastward of Morant Bay. The second Preacher assigned to the Morant Bay Circuit made his residence there; so early as 1819 a third of the Morant Bay Methodists belonged to Bath and its neighbourhood. Several intelligent gentlemen of that town attached themselves to the Mission, and co-operated to secure the provision of a chapel, opened in 1820<sup>1</sup>; the negroes flocking to this house of God made it too small at the outset. The *morale* of the slaves was notably improved from the time Methodism began to tell in the Bath District, which contained several of the largest sugar-estates of Jamaica. The reformation extorted approval for the Mission from the most prejudiced estate-owners and magistrates in this part of the island.

By the date of Emancipation the membership of the area covered by the original Morant Bay Circuit stood at not far short of 4,000,<sup>2</sup> forming nearly a third of the total Methodist Church constituency of Jamaica. From 1823 onwards there were nearly always two, from 1827 usually three, Circuits distinguished in the parishes situated east of Kingston; they bore the names, variously combined, of *Bath*, *Manchioneal*, *Port Antonio*, and *the Yallahs*,<sup>3</sup> along with *Morant Bay*. Port Antonio, which lies remote on the north-east coast, became early separated from the mother Circuit, although its Church membership was small.

Spiritually so fruitful, the Morant Bay ground proved fatal in an exceptional degree to the bodily health of the Missionaries. Here in 1820 Joseph Hartley, a youthful pastor of the fairest promise, cut off at the age of nineteen, laid down his life; within the same year the senior Missionary, William Ratcliffe, was bereaved of his wife and two children. In 1821 the District Chairman, George Johnston, stationed himself at the post of danger. Overwrought by his labours, he was

<sup>1</sup> His exertions in superintending the erection of this chapel brought on the attack of fever which ended George Johnston's valuable life.

<sup>2</sup> The *Minutes* of 1833 and 1834 give no detailed statistics for Jamaica, simply repeating the total membership of 1832. 'A more exact return cannot be made,' it is said, 'until the chapels which were destroyed during the insurrection be rebuilt, and the Societies formerly connected with them be reorganized.'

<sup>3</sup> The Yallahs is a district situated on the river of this name, half-way between Morant Bay and Kingston. This station was subsequently attached for a time to the Kingston East Circuit.



prostrated by fever, and passed away on October 5, 1821. The young Minister, James Evans Underhill, whose strength had been impaired by travelling this Circuit a little while back, coming to nurse Johnston from Kingston, was seized by the malady and died first of the two. Although but twenty-six years of age, Underhill was lamented as 'an excellent and experienced Minister.' Thus while the Lord carried on His work, He buried His workmen fast. In 1827 another tragic loss occurred on this station. Joseph Parkin was in the act of preaching a funeral sermon at Morant Bay for William Ratcliffe, who had died at Port Antonio, when sickness fell upon him, and in a few days he expired. Parkin's successor, James Penman—'a young man of deep piety and great promise'—fell a victim to the Morant Bay climate after but twenty months' service in the island. So the sad story went on, and the Mission was disorganized and crippled through recurrent casualties. John Atkins, who, travelling at Morant Bay in the year of Emancipation, lost there his admirable wife,<sup>1</sup> writes home ascribing the abnormal train of fatalities to overwork :

We are cramped in our efforts for want of men. . . . Look at the circumstances of this Circuit, and Bath Circuit . . . and say in what other place is it that two missionaries are placed in charge of upwards of 3,000 members of Society? It is not the climate only, but the excessive labour, that has made Jamaica such a *grave* of missionaries. We have pressing invitations, and doors of usefulness thrown open, which we cannot—dare not—enter, because we have already taken too much work upon ourselves—work that we cannot expect to endure for any length of time.

To the influence of the Mission, and the large proportion of the Negroes brought under its teaching and discipline, may be ascribed the fact that the insurrection of 1831-32, which swept through western Jamaica, left this region and its mass of slave-population almost untouched. Martial law was proclaimed here as in the west; outrages were committed by the Colonial Church Unionists, and illegal measures taken by panic-stricken magistrates. The actual violence was upon their side. The hue and cry after the Missionaries was raised in Bath and Morant Bay as elsewhere; and their work was obstructed through the prohibition of meetings amongst the Negroes; the

<sup>1</sup> This lady came to the station with a presentiment of death. Planting two cocoa-nut trees in the chapel-yard, she said, 'When I die, I wish to be buried there.'

Societies were for the time depleted. But the storm passed, doing little permanent harm to the Church.

Two men converted under Isaac Bradnack's ministry supplied the nucleus of the Society at Manchioneal. These were William Moodie, son of a Kingston Class-leader, who settled here as schoolmaster. In his new home he formed a Methodist Class, of which an intelligent mulatto slave named Robert James took the leadership; this man 'hired himself from his owner<sup>1</sup> in order to find time for doing good.'

Peter Duncan<sup>2</sup> tells the story of a coloured free woman of Manchioneal Bay, who, hearing through reports of Dr. Coke's preaching of the main points in his doctrine for the black folk—to the effect (1) that 'they should meet together to pray to God,' and (2) that 'they should get decently married'—resolved to disseminate these excellent principles. She therefore called the Negroes in her own locality to religious exercises, and since there was no one else within reach to officiate, she also solemnized marriage, in the most Christian fashion she could, for a number of couples who wished to sanctify their union. This enterprising woman acquired a wide and beneficial influence in the district, and prepared the way of the Gospel. But the white inhabitants were incensed at her proceedings, and she fled to Kingston, where she became a most useful Methodist leader. When the Kingston Chapel was closed, Mrs. Wilkinson (for this was the lady's name) worshipped at church, where, after the morning service, she would go round from pew to pew and talk about religion to members of the congregation who stayed behind to hear her homilies, thus turning the church into a Wesleyan Class-room!

The first Missionary to be set down at Manchioneal, in 1819, was James Underhill; but the appointment could not be continuously maintained. The Society thrived notwithstanding, and the Morant Bay Ministers paid to this corner of their Circuit the best attention they could. In 1823 the Society mustered about 500, when a chapel of considerable size was built and immediately filled to overflowing. A little later the Anglicans erected in Manchioneal a chapel-of-ease (attached

<sup>1</sup> A well-conducted slave was sometimes allowed to earn money in his spare time. Thus he might obtain means to partially release himself, compensating his master by payment for the hours of freedom. In some cases manumission was completely purchased in this way; then the freedman set to work to liberate his family. In Cuba this practice became quite common during the later times of slavery.

<sup>2</sup> *Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica*, pp. 18-21.

to the church of St. Thomas in-the-East), to which a clergyman was appointed who treated the Methodists as friends and co-operated with their Minister—an alliance previously unknown in any parish of Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> As Manchioneal Methodism for many years continued in Circuit association with Bath or Port Antonio, the growth of its membership cannot be distinctly traced ; but progress appears to have been steady, though not as striking as in some Societies. At the beginning of 1832 Manchioneal was again favoured with a Missionary of its own, in the person of James Rowden, who was next year followed by Daniel Barr, moved hither from Morant Bay. The local gentry—most of them enlisted in the Colonial Church Union and furious against ‘the sectarians’—made these much-respected Ministers for many months the objects of a disgraceful persecution, in the course of which Rowden was flung into gaol, to the serious detriment of his health, and Barr suffered restraint of his goods. For their illegal conduct in this business the two magistrates concerned were deported by the Earl of Mulgrave ; but the injuries and indignities suffered by their victims were not redressed. Nothing in the conduct of the Methodist Negroes justified the arbitrary measures taken ; but the slave insurrection of the west had fanned to an uncontrollable flame the hatred of Dissenting Ministers which burnt in the breast of slave-holders all over Jamaica.

PORT ANTONIO, situated eighty-two miles from Kingston, northeastwards, is the centre of the secluded and comparatively poor parish of Portland. The military force regularly quartered here added to the importance of the place. There were said to be not more than 750 slaves in the parish. Methodist soldiers lodged in the barracks, or sailors visiting the harbour, were the first preachers of Christ on this spot. In 1818 William Thaxter, a pious resident of Port Antonio, hearing of the handful of Methodists at Manchioneal, journeyed the distance of twenty-two miles to make their acquaintance. Encouraged by their sympathy, Thaxter invited like-minded neighbours to meet in his own house. Amongst these, devout soldiers and sailors were frequently found. The isolated company deemed itself a Methodist Society. The enterprising Missionaries of Morant Bay Circuit were informed of the

<sup>1</sup> The Rector of St. Thomas at that date was a man of like spirit. The influence of these two clergymen wrought a reformation in the parish which their successors failed to maintain.

meetings at Thaxter's dwelling, and in 1819 James Horne paid a visit thither. The Portland magistrates, to whom he applied for a preaching licence, gave a negative answer, on the ground 'that two religions could not agree in the same parish'! This veto was at last removed, when in 1826 David Kerr, the Missionary stationed at Bath, rented a preaching-place in Port Antonio and enrolled a promising Society of 35 members.

So important did this vantage-ground appear that the following Jamaica Synod located at Port Antonio its Chairman, William Ratcliffe,<sup>1</sup> with the object of forming a new Circuit. The Magistrates had now become favourable, and Ratcliffe was an eminently conciliatory Minister. He exerted himself unsparingly in the erection of the much-needed chapel, while his health demanded the furlough long due and promised to him. In this condition he was seized with fever. Preying rapidly on an exhausted frame, the disease proved fatal; and the course of this active and holy Missionary ended on August 16, 1827, after eleven years' work in Jamaica. The kindly curate of Portland, the Rev. George Griffith, sent to the Mission House a touching account of the death of this man of God whose hand was clasped in his at the moment of dissolution. At his burying the entire parish joined to honour the Methodist Missionary.

James Edney—a man resembling Ratcliffe in spirit, if not his equal in talent—succeeded him at Port Antonio, with which Manchioneal was united in one Circuit. Edney was an Irishman, then fresh from home. He had a long and steadily useful missionary career, serving fourteen years in Jamaica, after that (till 1846) four years in other parts of the West Indies; five years (1850–55) he subsequently gave to Western Africa. Finally, he returned for another seven years of labour (1858–65), to the islands. 'Affectionate earnestness,' 'quiet zeal and patient perseverance,' are noted as Edney's distinguishing traits. He and his successor, James Vowles (who succumbed to the climate within a few months<sup>2</sup>), extended the Circuit right along the coast. The Port Antonio Chapel, subject in its building to sad interruptions, was not opened until Christmas Day, 1831. Scarcely had it come into use when it was

<sup>1</sup> Successor in office to John Shipman.

<sup>2</sup> Port Antonio was noted at that time as an unhealthy spot, and the Minister's house was wretchedly situated.



commandeered by the military on account of the insurrection. The Church Unionists attempted to burn the chapel down; they harried the Methodists of the parish, although no one pretended they were accomplices in the rebellion, which barely touched this locality. The Missionaries Greenwood and Rowden were, in turn, compelled to quit Port Antonio Circuit during the years 1831-33. The church survived the storm, though in a decimated and battered condition.

Westward of Port Antonio, Falmouth<sup>1</sup> supplied the centre of the Mission along the north coast in its re-beginning, after the expulsion of William Fish from Montego Bay in 1797. Pressing invitations had been coming from this town to the Kingston Missionaries for some time, when in 1818 John Shipman planted himself there. The Honourable James Stewart, one of the most respected public men of Jamaica, and Custos of the parish at that period, actively encouraged the Mission here. Shipman and the Ministers who followed him gathered a respectable, and often numerous, congregation in Falmouth; but for some years they mourned the scanty spiritual fruit won and their failure to reach the mass of the Negroes.

Behind Falmouth lay the extensive parish of Trelawney, covering the ground of the old Maroon wars, which contained many rich plantations. Outside of these, a numerous contingent of free Blacks and Mulattos cultivated small holdings in the district. William Ratcliffe, who opened the first Methodist chapel here in 1824, saw the beginning of better days. He returned to live in Falmouth. For some time the Missionary made his home at Montego Bay, where a larger Society had been formed. The entire Church membership of the Circuit was still under 300. Ratcliffe reports two notable signs of improvement—the closing of traders' stores on the Lord's Day, and the marriage, through his offices, of several negro couples. Marriage in this district, he says, was quite a novelty! During the next year the Falmouth Society increased from 32 to 66 members, including 17 British soldiers of the 33rd Regiment, a company of which was quartered here. By the year 1827 Methodism had so far advanced in this region that Montego Bay and Falmouth were made heads of separate Circuits, the latter with a membership of 119. In 1832 this number

<sup>1</sup> Falmouth superseded the earlier town of *Martha Brae*.

mounted up to 980. The large increment was due to accessions from the Negroes of the interior. The mass-movement of the slaves toward Christianity, which began earlier in the east about Morant Bay, had set in toward the west, but it received a sudden and lamentable check.

The slave rebellion of 1831-32, which broke out in the parishes of Hanover and St. James<sup>1</sup> (the latter including Montego Bay), strongly affected the neighbouring Trelawney. At the end of 1831 William Box left Falmouth, where he had been Minister in charge, for another station; in doing so, he was able to give a gratifying report of the Circuit. His addresses of leave-taking were directed to calm the excitement of the black folk and dissuade them from acts of sedition and turbulence. Unhappily, the greater part of the magistrates were obsessed with the idea that the insurrection was prompted by the Dissenters. The *Cornwall Courier*—a newspaper published at Falmouth and rabidly hostile to the Missionaries—clamoured for their arrest. They should at least be put under police observation, since it became every day more evident that 'rebellion had been actually preached to the slaves and instilled into their minds' by their pastors. Martial law was in force from New Year's Day, 1832; the Colonel in command at Falmouth readily gave Mr. Box a permit to travel to his Synod meeting at Kingston. Notwithstanding, the Trelawney Custos sent after him instructions for his arrest as a dangerous person. Accordingly Box was seized at Spanish Town and thrown into gaol, to be released after five days in default of any definite charge against him.<sup>2</sup> This was the first of a train of outrages committed on Wesleyan Missionaries, which arose from the panic of the country magistrates and the blind hatred many of them entertained toward those who brought God's redemption to their slaves.

The Methodist flock in Falmouth suffered more cruelly than their pastor. Their complicity with the rebellion was assumed,

<sup>1</sup> Although no love had been lost between the Maroons and the slave negroes in the rebellion of thirty-six years earlier, that extraordinary conflict was not forgotten; the Maroon traditions were secretly cherished, and stimulated negro ambition through the west of the island.

<sup>2</sup> Box's description may serve for other West Indian gaols in which our Missionaries languished—'this wretched and loathsome prison'—54 fellow prisoners, herded by day in one room, 'some afflicted with small-pox,' &c., nearly all 'encrusted with filth,' no water for washing either skin or clothes; at night everything swarming with vermin; the whole place buzzing with venomous insects; 'poisonous effluvia,' and so on. A little longer and the sufferer would almost certainly have fallen a prey to malignant disease.

without a scrap of evidence. Mr. Box's baggage, left behind to be sent after him, was ransacked, and his papers searched for incriminating matter ; nothing was discovered which could be offered in any Court of Justice. Garbled extracts appeared subsequently in the *Cornwall Courier*,<sup>1</sup> alleged to be drawn from Box's papers ; it required a malignant ingenuity to twist them to the purpose.

Two men of colour, leaders of the Falmouth Society, were signalled out for punishment with a view to terrorizing the rest. One of these, by name Robert Lamont, who held a position of trust on a neighbouring plantation—a man respected by all who knew him for his 'intelligence, prudence, and piety'—was arrested by the militia, tried before a drunken Court, and (on the ground that he was a Methodist Leader, and therefore a conspirator) sentenced to receive five hundred lashes<sup>2</sup> and to work in chains for the rest of his natural life ! Under this awful sentence Lamont died within twelve months—a Methodist martyr.<sup>3</sup> His companion and near relative, John Baillie,<sup>4</sup> also a slave, was the son of a former manager of the estate to which Lamont and he belonged. Baillie's father had bequeathed money toward his manumission, to which sum the son added by his industry, so that he was able to offer his master his market-price ; the master could not spare him—his services were too valuable !<sup>5</sup> Sharing the crime, Baillie was sentenced to the same punishment as his kinsman. But he fainted under the lash, and the surgeon in attendance forbade the continuance of the flogging. For the remainder of his doom the miserable man was committed to the Rodney Hall workhouse<sup>6</sup>—'a place of punishment of appalling notoriety'—where he remained under the harshest conditions of convict labour until, in 1833, the new Governor of Jamaica, on inquiring into the cases of arbitrary imprisonment, released him. These were amongst

<sup>1</sup> The editor was also the magistrate who seized the Missionary's private correspondence and turned it to his own journalistic account. This mean and scandalous illegality was afterwards brought home to him.

<sup>2</sup> To be administered, one presumes, by instalments.

<sup>3</sup> The above stories are told, with a string of others equally pathetic, in Bleby's *Death Struggles of Slavery*, Chapter VIII., entitled 'Martyred Slaves.' Peter Duncan, in his *Narrative* (pp. 299, 300), dwells also on these pitiful cases.

<sup>4</sup> So the name is given by Duncan. Bleby has it *William* Baillie, otherwise the narratives perfectly agree.

<sup>5</sup> When in 1831, just before the rebellion, Bills were introduced into the House of Assembly to compel slave-owners to accept in such cases the price of liberation and to abolish the flogging of female slaves, both measures were rejected by the Representatives.

<sup>6</sup> 'Workhouse' in Jamaica meant 'House of Correction.'

the earliest incidents of the ruthless persecution through which the Methodist and Baptist Churches of Jamaica passed during the reign of terror.

By the month of February the Church Unionists were busily at work in Trelawney parish. They pulled down first the Baptist, then the Methodist, church at Falmouth. After demolition in the latter case, the material was being carried off by plunderers, when one of these met a miserable death through the falling upon him of a dislodged beam. Not a nail of the débris was touched after this.

Henry Bleby, the young Missionary appointed to Falmouth at this juncture, arrived with his wife and infant child about the beginning of April, 1832. The people were so intimidated that it was with difficulty he found a roof to shelter his family. When a handful of neighbours joined the household next morning at worship, he was notified that no such assembly would be permitted, as the house was unlicensed. A letter signed 'Mob' warned him to decamp; the threat failing of effect, within three days of his coming a band of white rioters armed with bludgeons broke into the dwelling. They seized the Missionary and coated him with tar and feathers, belabouring him the while and cursing him for 'a preaching villain.' One of the crew, snatching the candle from the table, would have set the tar-bedaubed Preacher on fire, had not his wife in the nick of time rushed into the room and knocked the lighted candle from the ruffian's hand. The infant, whom she had laid on the sofa, adding its wailing to the confusion, the cry was raised, 'Throw that cursed brat through the window!' whereupon Mrs. Bleby picked up her babe and escaped from the house in rueful plight. At this moment a number of friends arrived on the scene whose appearance disturbed the tormentors. In the darkness the enemy mistook one of their own associates for Bleby, and beat him savagely; the luckless man's skull was so fractured that his brain became disordered and he died raving. Such was the malignity of the persecutors that they threatened with a court-martial the men who came to their pastor's rescue. Bills were filed against the rioters at the following Assizes; but the Grand Jury of the County of Cornwall threw them out, and the criminals were never brought to justice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apologies were made for this piece of lynch-law as 'a drunken frolic'! The scenes of *Tom Cringle's Log* (by Michael Scott)—particularly those pictured in Chapters VII. and XVIII. ('Tropical High-jinks')—show to what length 'frolics' could be



In the following July a desperate effort was made to crush the odious sectarians by a meeting of the Colonial Church Union held at Falmouth, which prohibited business dealings with them throughout the island. To this effect a 'solemn declaration' was drawn up, copies of which were distributed in every parish. Whoever refused to sign this paper was to be marked as a public enemy and cut off from all commercial dealings and friendly offices. In several districts this wicked attempt was carried into practice for a time. Amongst the slaves through the greater part of the country the profession of Methodist or Baptist sentiments was suppressed by the cart-whip. For more than a year the Falmouth Missionary was an absentee from his Circuit; life had been made impossible to him there.

The Henry Bleby of the preceding paragraph was the founder of a distinguished missionary family, and himself a very notable man. He laboured for forty-six years in the West Indies—the longest term of active service rendered by any white Methodist Missionary. A third of this protracted period was devoted to Jamaica; but Bleby 'travelled' in nearly every part of West Indian Methodism, and gained a unique knowledge of its varied conditions and the course of its affairs. Perfect fearlessness, organizing and administrative power, unstinted generosity, whole-souled devotion to the cause of the Negro, were outstanding features of Henry Bleby's character. One of his friends writes:

In his defence of the black man he sometimes offended those who were at heart as just and humanitarian as himself; but his very blunders were on the side of chivalry and righteousness.

Wielding a graphic and incisive pen, he wrote books on West Indian subjects which have been widely read. Of the most important of Bleby's works, entitled *Death Struggles of Slavery* (1853), we have made extensive use in this History.

The story of the MONTEGO BAY Circuit in its early days was parallel with that of its eastern neighbour Falmouth. John Shipman had not long settled at the latter place when urgent messages reached him from the former. Sergeant Waugh, a pious soldier on duty there, wrote to say that he had come upon survivors of William Fish's Church of twenty years

carried in Jamaica; and the perpetrators of this exploit were *drunken* enough, or they would have succeeded in their murderous purpose! But the assault on Bleby was deliberately planned; it was part of an organized campaign of rightfulness.

earlier, who were meeting in Class along with himself. 'I firmly believe,' he concludes, 'there are still' in Montego Bay 'many souls' prepared to be 'led in the way of salvation.' The good soldier's message was supported by a merchant of the name of Jones, who with his friends had purchased the old court-house of the town to serve for a chapel, at the cost of £400—which sum they expected to raise by public subscription—with a view to having Methodist preaching revived amongst them. The subscribers asked Mr. Shipman's assistance in obtaining a licence for the building; they hoped soon to see him in the pulpit. 'Many wish,' Mr. Jones adds, 'to hear the sound of the Gospel.' These generous arrangements took effect, and the next year Shipman speaks of 'good congregations' and constant accessions to the Society at Montego Bay.

Montego Bay was the second town of Jamaica in size and commercial importance. Shipman's successors during the following seven years (1819-26) were William Ratcliffe, Isaac Whitehouse, and John Crofts, who appear generally to have resided here in preference to Falmouth.

Ratcliffe extended the Montego Bay and Falmouth Circuit by establishing preaching-places amongst the inland Negroes; he begged the Committee to send him a fellow worker to carry on this movement—a request granted to his successor. With the appointment of the second Minister the two towns became heads of distinct Circuits, Montego Bay having then a Church membership of 523—nearly fivefold the number credited to Falmouth. During the subsequent period both Circuits prospered; in 1832 Montego Bay counted on its Class-books 1,090 names, four-fifths of them the names of slaves.

Joseph Orton, who later accomplished so great a work for God in Australia, was the first Superintendent of the new limited Circuit. He carried the Mission to Accompong Town, an old Maroon settlement in the heart of the mountains, thirty-six miles south of Montego Bay. During the year of Orton's leadership, 210 members were added to the Society; the Montego Bay congregation outgrew its make-shift chapel. A well-built and commodious sanctuary seating 800 people, erected under the ministry of Peter Duncan, Orton's successor, was opened in March, 1830. This chapel, like that of Falmouth, was commandeered by the military during the rebellion; but it escaped the threatened demolition. 'The moral effects

of martial law in Montego Bay,' writes Samuel, 'were very painful; for a long season religion and morality appeared to be trampled under foot.' Amongst the black people, 'none dared to assemble publicly in order to worship God.' One hundred and twenty Negroes were publicly executed at the Bay; Bleby, who personally witnessed many of the court-martial trials, declares: 'I can scarcely conceive anything more revolting than the levity and brutality with which the proceedings were conducted.'

The Church Unionists failed to secure at Montego Bay the ascendancy they held in the smaller coast-towns; the Methodist freemen armed themselves in defence of their property. Thomas Murray, the Missionary, stood his ground; and when in the course of 1832, the chapel was vacated by the militia, he had it cleaned and reopened for worship. A few weeks later, after the Unionist Convention at Falmouth, he was summoned before the Court of Quarter Sessions under charge of preaching in an unlicensed building, himself also without a proper licence. He showed the licence taken out for the former chapel in 1819, and pleaded the sufficiency of his English credentials, which had been recognized throughout his ten years' ministry in the islands. He had taken the required oaths at Spanish Town in 1826, and was prepared to do the same here, if repetition was necessary; he had brought a form of declaration prepared for the purpose, and would qualify at once, with the permission of the Court. Two of the magistrates gave their opinion in favour of the application; the majority, who were members of the Union and pledged to suppress the Preachers, decided in the negative. The accused was informed that any further attempt at preaching would land him in prison. In fear of the bloodshed likely to attend resistance, Murray reluctantly submitted, and the Montego Bay Chapel was closed. The Baptists of the town suffered the same inhibition.

In Montego Bay there was, however, a public opinion strong enough to defy the terrorists. A meeting of citizens was summoned independently of the injured parties, and largely attended, which addressed to the Governor an outspoken memorial denouncing the action of the Church Union and the Falmouth resolutions in particular, and declaring the purpose of those present 'to repel any illegal attempt to control them

in the exercise of their civil and religious liberties, secured to them by the British Constitution.' The Committee appointed to prepare the remonstrance was also empowered to correspond with Committees of other parishes, so that measures might be concerted for joint defence. Thus a centre of resistance to the tyranny of the Union was formed at Montego Bay; the island was, in fact, ripening for civil war!

The Earl of Mulgrave (afterwards Marquis of Normanby), who entered on the Governor's office in July, was fortunately a man of different principles and temper from most of his predecessors. He was prepared to enforce the law impartially upon slave-holders and slaves, and refused to brook for a single hour the usurpations of the planter confederacy. In January, 1833, a Royal Proclamation was issued dissolving the Colonial Church Union, and calling upon judges and magistrates 'to give full effect to the laws for the toleration of religious worship, and to bring to trial all such persons as might be found violating them.' Copies of the proclamation were forwarded to the Custos of each parish, accompanied by a circular expressing the determination of the Governor to enforce it without fear or favour and by all the means in his power. He desired it to be known 'that neither actual violence, nor a repetition of illegal threats, will be allowed to pass unpunished.' The rage of the oppressors at the appearance of these manifestoes was unbounded; in the streets of Spanish Town the Earl and Countess of Mulgrave met with open insult. But the new Governor was as good as his word, and the Union, after a few convulsive struggles, disappeared.

Thomas Murray, who had sent a petition to the Governor respecting the miscarriage of justice in his case (which His Excellency referred to the Attorney-General), on the strength of the Royal Proclamation reopened the Montego Bay Chapel, which had been closed for nine months.<sup>1</sup> The magistrates, not yet prepared to give up the fight, issued a warrant for his apprehension. Along with two Baptist Ministers, the Methodist Preacher was committed to gaol for his crime. An application to the Chief Justice brought the offenders' release from incarceration within eight days, under the obligation to answer to the charge of unlicensed preaching at the County Assizes.

<sup>1</sup> Murray stayed by his flock, and the Class-meetings and pastoral work were carried on unhindered in the town. The slaves in the country, who most needed help, were, however, totally cut off from all means of grace.



Meanwhile they resumed their ministrations. The legal proceedings terminated in the acquittal of the accused. The month of July, 1833, saw the conflict ended in Montego Bay. Gradually the Mission resumed its full activities. By the close of 1834 the Circuit had recovered, in point of numbers, the prosperity of three years earlier; but discipline had suffered inevitably through the suspension of pastoral oversight. Murray was compelled to return to England when the battle was over, and never resumed work in the islands. Through the trying scenes of his experience at Montego Bay 'he had conducted himself with so much prudence and fidelity that even his enemies were constrained to acknowledge him to be a man of God.' 'Mr. Murray,' says Duncan, 'was the last of the Wesleyan Missionaries in Jamaica who suffered bonds and imprisonment for preaching the Gospel.'

In the parish of St. ANN's, where the Colonial Church Union was born, the persecution reached its highest pitch. St. Ann's Bay opens midway along the north coast of Jamaica, being fifty miles eastward of Montego Bay and somewhat farther from Port Antonio. In point of scenery and natural beauty this is counted the loveliest region in all Jamaica. The Methodism of St. Ann's Bay originated with a planter and magistrate, Stephen Drew by name, proprietor of the Belmont Estate, situated amongst the hills some miles inland from the port. He was a cultivated man trained for the legal profession; subsequently he defended the Missionaries in an important trial at the Supreme Court of Justice in Jamaica. Under the influence of his new convictions Drew began to hold daily prayers with his family and slaves, and to give them readings out of Wesley, the beneficial effect of which was soon perceptible. Visiting Spanish Town in 1817, he sought out the Wesleyan Minister of the place, John Shipman, who led him into the fuller light of the Gospel. With this excellent man Drew contracted an intimate friendship. Soon Shipman visited Belmont, which lies forty miles away from Spanish Town across the central mountains of Jamaica.

Here the Missionary and his invalid wife found themselves in a delightful home. Shipman baptized several score Negroes who had been prepared by instruction for the rite, and formed a Methodist Society at Belmont of twenty persons. The ensuing Synod appointed him to Falmouth, and he attached

the Belmont Society to that Circuit ; for though Falmouth is farther distant than Spanish Town, the journey from the former place is comparatively easy. Working from Belmont, by the year 1821 the Missionary had formed at the eastern end of the Montego Bay and Falmouth Circuit a group of preaching-places, including Runaway Bay, Dry Harbour, and Ocho Rios, of which St. Ann's supplied the centre. The London Committee acceded to the request that a Missionary should be posted here. Drew built a chapel near Belmont, and went far to guarantee the Preacher's support. The first missionary appointment to this area was made in 1822, when St. Ann's was credited with 40 Church members. Premises were secured at St. Ann's Bay, where a full congregation was gathered and the Society advanced.

But opposition soon declared itself. The magistrates and planters generally were of a totally different mind from Stephen Drew. The animosity against 'sectarians' which disturbed the islands in the years 1823-24, and came to a violent explosion in Barbados, broke out furiously in St. Ann's parish. Its first open manifestation was the firing of a squad of local militia, with loaded muskets, at dead of night into the rooms below the St. Ann's Chapel, in which William Ratcliffe and his family were lodged.<sup>1</sup> By a good providence none of its sleeping inmates were struck. Councillor Drew put the matter in train for legal inquiry ; but while the case was pending sudden illness overtook him, and he died on January 6, 1827. A sorer loss the Methodist Church in the island could not have sustained. Stephen Drew was a tower of strength to his despised and harassed brethren, and his house offered a haven of rest and friendship to the Jamaica Missionaries.

The shooting affair at St. Ann's made a sensation in the island ; it became the subject of inquiry and motion in the

<sup>1</sup> Ratcliffe was then residing chiefly at Belmont, in the house built for the Preacher beside the chapel. The Rector of St. Ann's instigated the outrage on the Methodist Missionary. On Christmas Day morning he preached an inflammatory discourse against Dissenters, of which that demonstration was the sequel ; the identity of *post hoc* and *propter hoc* was notorious at the time. Of this reverend gentleman Duncan says : ' There can be no doubt but his avowed hostility to the Mission contributed to excite the spirit of cruel and relentless persecution which has entailed so much disgrace upon his ostentatious but ignorant parishioners.' Reading the extracts Duncan gives from the rector's Christmas Day sermon, which he published in self-exculpation (!), one understands how it happened that the Colonial Church Union originated in St. Ann's parish and incorporated in its title the name of *the Church*. According to Duncan (see his *Mission to Jamaica*, p. 289), this clergyman was the concocter of the whole plot. The same man was guilty of the shocking maltreatment of the Methodist Negro, Henry Williams (see Bleby's *Death Struggles of Slavery*, Chapter VII.).

British House of Commons, and of a correspondence between the Colonial Secretary and the then Governor of Jamaica (the Duke of Manchester), in which the latter shows to ill advantage. But the perpetrators were never brought to book.

Up to this time the Negroes of St. Ann's parish, like those of Falmouth, appeared as a body to be little affected by the preaching of the Gospel amongst them. William Ratcliffe left the Circuit after three years' hard toil, with much disappointment upon this score, although the Church membership had now reached the respectable figure of 301.

Joseph Grimsdall, who followed Ratcliffe, saw in the few months of his labours a marvellous change. Again and again it proved in the West Indies that nothing so touched the slaves as sufferings manifestly undergone by the Missionaries on their behalf. The shots fired at Ratcliffe and his children because of his love to *them* pierced the heart of the black people. He had gone; but they crowded everywhere to listen to his successor. The chapels, half empty before, became too strait, and Grimsdall—a junior Missionary in the second year of probation, but 'a man of deep and genuine piety'—took the best advantage of his popularity. The Spirit of God came down on the congregations, sinners were convicted and converted by scores at every place in the Circuit. In the statistics of 1828 the St. Ann's Church membership figures as 656, more than doubling the number of the year before. Instead of putting them to shame, the efficacy of the Gospel amongst the Negroes exasperated the ring of planter-magistrates, who were no longer held in check by the presence and legal authority of Stephen Drew. The Chief Constable, a willing instrument, was set to watch and harass the Methodists, as though they were known law-breakers. Chapel-going Negroes were systematically bullied and brought into trouble with their masters.

The Slave-law of 1826, not yet vetoed by the Crown, put sharp weapons into persecutors' hands. Grimsdall was warned to stop preaching, as he had not been licensed for this parish. He proceeded to qualify before the Court of Quarter Sessions, where the Custos, the Honourable Henry Cox—an upright, though pliable man—admitted his claims. Fresh occasion was found, however, against the Missionary, who

early in June was summoned (1) for preaching in an unlicensed house at Ocho Rios, and (2) for preaching at St. Ann's Bay to Negroes during unlawful hours. The former charge was dropped on Grimsdall's promise not to preach at Ocho Rios till the next Quarter Sessions, when the licence already applied for might be completed. On the second count, though the Preacher had observed the letter of the law, he was sentenced to the common gaol for ten days. 'The place of his confinement,' writes Duncan, from personal observation, 'was one of the most loathsome that could be conceived. . . . The stench was almost insupportable. . . . Not so much as a pallet of straw to lie upon.'<sup>1</sup> The magistrates would not have housed their *swine* so ill! Three months after his release from this filthy hole Grimsdall was again called into court for marrying a couple of slaves without their master's consent, although the Colonial Office in London some years earlier had expressly declared this to be no legal offence. At the same time two members of his Church were indicted—a free man and a woman of colour—for unlawful religious exercises, performed in the latter instance within the woman's own house.

The above cases were brought up at the October Quarter Sessions, and Messrs. Barry and Murray came over from Spanish Town and Kingston to stand by their persecuted brother. Barry, as he showed in his duel with the editor of *The Courant*, had the skill of an accomplished barrister. The allegations against Grimsdall's companions were dismissed by Custos Cox as trumpery. No ground in law was forthcoming for the prosecution of Grimsdall, but his was regarded as being a test case, and remitted therefore to the Supreme Court. Before the Court met Joseph Grimsdall was summoned to a higher tribunal. He died at Belmont, full of holy triumph, on December 15, 1827, in the thirty-second year of his age.

About the end of 1827 His Majesty's disallowance of the Jamaica Slave-law of the preceding year was published. The St. Ann's justices, unabashed, returned to the attack. Isaac Whitehouse succeeded the lamented Grimsdall in the care of the Methodist Circuit. He had been but a month on the

<sup>1</sup> *Mission to Jamaica*, pp. 196–207, where a full account of the strange proceedings in Grimsdall's case is given.



ground when he was summoned for unlicensed preaching ; though licensed previously in another parish, and holding this to be legally sufficient, Whitehouse consented for peace's sake to request a new permit. In making out his certificate the Clerk of the Peace restricted the permission to certain specified places in the parish. Whitehouse declined to accept this limited form of licence ; but as he had taken the prescribed oaths before the Court, he deemed himself safeguarded. He was notwithstanding apprehended under warrant, and charged with unlicensed preaching. The three magistrates before whom he appeared bound him over for trial at the ensuing Sessions, and forbade his preaching meanwhile. On his refusing to submit to the last-mentioned order as contrary to the liberties of a British subject, the presiding magistrate replied : ' The decision of the Bench is the law ! ' Continuing his ministry, Whitehouse within a few days was committed to the cell in which his predecessor had suffered.

The imprisoned Missionary wrote to his brethren Barry and Duncan begging them to come to his help. When they arrived, they found Joseph Orton from Montego Bay on the scene before them. He had preached in Whitehouse's place the previous evening, and a warrant was out against him. Orton was summoned before the hostile magistrates, when Duncan and Barry stepped forward offering bail for the second accused, and desiring to do so in the case of the first, already lodged in gaol. The magistrates refused to accept bail for Orton's appearance at the Assizes unless security was given that he would meanwhile refrain from preaching within the bounds of the parish. Rejecting this condition, Orton was sent to join Whitehouse. It transpired that Whitehouse had been incarcerated without the option of tendering bail ; moreover, the Bench was obliged to allow that at the time of the preaching in question he was legally licensed. Barry and Duncan forthwith proceeded to Kingston, where they obtained a writ of *habeas corpus*, on the issue of which the accused men were removed to the capital.<sup>1</sup> At the moment of their arrival

<sup>1</sup> Whitehouse had spent fourteen days and Orton ten in the noisome St. Ann's gaol. Grimsdall got his death-blow here ; Orton caught the seeds of the malady which in a couple of years sent him out of the islands and shortened his valuable life. On his commitment Whitehouse begged of the magistrates ' the favour of being bound in the irons in the market-place ' instead of being sent to the fatal cell, and received the answer : ' The magistrates of St. Ann's are determined to do their duty. . . . Whatever might come, he should be treated just as the former Preacher ' had been.

at the Kingston prison the island was shaken by an alarming earthquake. Allowed to spend the night with their friends, the prisoners next morning appeared at the bar of the Chief Justice, who quashed the charge against Orton and removed Whitehouse's case from the St. Ann's Sessions to the Supreme Court. Lieutenant-Governor Keane, on having the record of proceedings laid before him, degraded the two magistrates chiefly responsible,<sup>1</sup> observing in his letter of admonition to the local Bench that 'the Wesleyan Missionaries were not to be hunted down like a parcel of dogs!'

Whitehouse's case was due to be decided by the Supreme Court in October, 1828. Anticipating this trial, the enemy in St. Ann's made a daring move; a charge of *wilful and corrupt perjury* was lodged against Messrs. Barry, Duncan, and Orton in the matter of their (alleged) offering of bail on behalf of the last-named in the Magistrates' Court. One of the deposed magistrates,<sup>2</sup> and the Chief Constable who was present throughout the St. Ann's proceedings, took oath that no such bail was tendered! Orton's impeachment was heard at the County Assizes of Cornwall.<sup>3</sup> Though the Judge, a well-known planter, leaned to the accusers, the evidence was so conclusive that the jury acquitted Orton; the prosecution of his companions was abandoned. Immediately after this Whitehouse's trial came on at Spanish Town. It was followed with extreme interest; the liberty of Nonconformist preaching to the Negroes turned upon it. The Attorney-General laid the case before the court in an impartial speech; after a full hearing, the indictment was quashed. In their turn the magistrates of St. Ann's were liable to prosecution for false imprisonment; and the one who had charged the three Missionaries with perjury laid himself open to a counter-charge on the same count. But the injured men were not vindictive; they let the quarrel drop.

For a couple of years thereafter the Churches of the St. Ann's Circuit had rest, and were edified and multiplied. East

<sup>1</sup> The succeeding Governor, the Earl of Belmore, reinstated the senior of the two, who was the mover in the trial for perjury related in the next paragraph and a protagonist of the Colonial Church Union.

<sup>2</sup> His companion, a hater of the Mission but a man of honour, refused to join in this action. He was reported ill; but the cause of absence was well understood.

<sup>3</sup> This county covers the west of Jamaica.

of Ocho Rios, Oracabessa, in St. Mary's parish, had been already occupied ; the Mission was carried to Port Maria, twenty-five miles farther eastwards. A young colleague, William Saxton, was sent to help Isaac Whitehouse at the beginning of 1830 ; before the year closed he was carried off by fever. The two men had wrought with the utmost energy, and with corresponding success. Inland as well as coastwise the Missionaries itinerated ; fresh preaching-places were opened and new Societies formed. At the Synod of January, 1831, concluding Whitehouse's term of service at St. Ann's, a Church membership of 1,030 was registered—the largest in any Jamaica Circuit after Kingston and Morant Bay. Twelve months later the ' St. Ann's and Belmont ' Circuit reported a membership of 1,499.

The calm preluded a storm more wild and destructive than that already endured. The negro rising of December, 1831, though confined to the parishes west of St. Ann's, aroused the fiercest passions of the Whites in this district. Smarting as they were under the chagrin of defeat, their enmity toward Dissent burst into frenzy. Here the Colonial Church Union was instituted, and this parish supplied its most determined leaders. No sooner was this conspiracy formed than the Missionaries upon the ground (David Kerr and William Wood) had to flee for their lives. Headed by the local member of the House of Assembly, with magistrates, Captains of Militia, Chief Constable, Deputy-Marshal, the mob of white men and their coloured dependants set about the systematic destruction of the Baptist and Wesleyan Mission property within their bounds. This done, the rabble fabricated three effigies to represent the sectarian Preachers, and strung these upon the gallows in default of the originals who had escaped their hands.

The black people of Trelawney parish were perfectly quiet during the insurrection ; several amongst them, nevertheless, were singled out for punishment on various pretexts—in reality, for the crime of Methodism. One of the sufferers was the slave Henry Williams, who was flogged almost to death and condemned to the Rodney House of Correction for participating in a watch-night prayer-meeting. The report of his tortures excited pity throughout Jamaica ; in England a sum of money was raised for his manumission, which the poor broken fellow

did not live long to enjoy.<sup>1</sup> Before the end of January the insurrection farther west was trampled out, having lasted barely a month ; the reign of martial law ceased on February 5. The slaves submitted forthwith when they saw the King's troops in motion against them ; they were no rebels to the British Crown.

In the following week the Jamaica Synod met, appointing William Wood and John Greenwood to St. Ann's. These Missionaries could not at once take up their post ; the Church Union ruled the parish, and appearance at St. Ann's would have brought on them certain death. Meanwhile their people were enduring unspeakable things. At length, early in the month of June, the two Preachers ventured round to the Circuit by sea. A coloured lady was bold enough to give them shelter. Two days after their coming the Unionists beset the house ; finding it surrounded by a body of free black and coloured men prepared to resist, they postponed the assault until the approaching muster of the militia should supply them with an overwhelming force. Messrs. Wood and Greenwood wrote to Custos Cox, informing him of their arrival and the impending attack. They came, they said, at the invitation of a considerable part of the free population of the parish, whose places of worship had been destroyed by a riotous mob ; they claimed His Honour's support, since he was the guardian of the public peace ; if other protection were wanting, their friends were resolved to defend them at all hazards. The Custos replied in abject terms, 'deploring the unfortunate violence that had been displayed,' but protesting himself 'without any means to protect' the threatened parties. 'I should not,' he concludes 'consider my own person safe, were I to attempt to interfere on your behalf.' This unhappy man, Duncan testifies, 'was one of the best white colonists.' Allowing himself at the outset to be named President of the Colonial Church Union, he had become an accomplice in its nefarious doings, though he took no personal part in them. He was 'a tool in violent hands, *frightened* into a position he mortally disliked.' Like other weak men before and since his time, of high station and moderate views, Mr. Henry Cox flattered himself that by joining

<sup>1</sup> See Henry Williams' story, told in Bleby's *Death Struggles of Slavery*, Chapter VII., 'Negro Fortitude' ; it is one of the most affecting tales of Christian martyrdom ever written. Williams, like Baillie, was released by Lord Mulgrave. The notorious St. Ann's Rector was guilty of the hounding to death of this noble Christian man.



the extremists he would restrain them, only to be dragged into criminal compliance. In the end the ignominy of his associates fell upon their nominal leader. When, a few months later, the Colonial Church Union was suppressed by the Government, Custos Cox found himself compelled to resign his magistracy and public functions.

Seeing that the arm of the law was powerless at St. Ann's and their remaining meant almost certain bloodshed, the Missionaries withdrew to Kingston; next month, however, Greenwood came across to Port Maria, which lay within the same Circuit, but in another parish. He was attacked there on the old count of preaching in one parish with a licence procured in another. The St. Ann's experience was renewed<sup>1</sup>; Greenwood was put in gaol for refusing to pledge himself not to preach until Quarter Sessions. The St. Mary's gaoler had some spark of humanity, and this parish gaol was not so absolutely fetid as that of St. Ann's; but the victim, who was twice incarcerated here, describes its 'floor of damp clay, nauseous effluvia from walls and ground, scarcely a breath of air admitted day or night'; this he had to endure at the height of a tropical summer.

By the end of August Greenwood was driven again to Kingston; soon he was back amongst his harried flock, resuming his ministry as best he could without chapel or settled home, constantly spied upon and in peril by day and night. Meanwhile, early in the year 1833, the St. Ann's bench of magistrates was cleared of its Unionist occupants,<sup>2</sup> and a new Custos, the Honourable Samuel Moulton Barrett, was appointed. The Governor, the Earl of Mulgrave, himself came down to the parish. Calling together the militia, in the presence of the troops he dismissed their commanding officer, who had been a leader in Unionist violence and notoriously insolent toward the representatives of the British power.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The accuser at Port Maria on this occasion was a *Jew*; Jews were conspicuous in the campaign against Methodism at St. Ann's. The action of these men recalls the part played by their people in the persecutions of the early Christians under the Roman Empire. Jews were noticeably numerous and prosperous at this time in Jamaica; many were men of a peaceable and even friendly spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Eleven magistrates were deposed at a stroke in this parish, in accordance with the Royal Proclamation just issued.

<sup>3</sup> This man had gone so far as, when addressing in his uniform the militia at the last muster, to taunt the Governor and Captain-general of the colonial forces with taking measures against those who bore the brunt of danger, while himself in safety at Spanish Town. The Governor came down to St. Ann's on this business attended only by his civil suite. A few Colonial officers on parade made signs of disobedience;

John Greenwood presented himself before a new Court of Quarter Sessions in the following July, when a scene took place in which the Church Unionists outdid themselves. At the hearing of Greenwood's application for licence to preach, a noisy crowd appeared in the Court-house armed with clubs and headed by ex-magistrates, who shouted: 'We want no Methodist parsons here!' The Custos called for order, and appealed to the law under which he was acting. 'Our determination is above law; we set the law at defiance!' the rabble cried. On this they made a rush for the hated Missionary, whom Mr. Barrett sheltered behind his chair, finally pointing him to a door at the back of the platform through which he escaped. Missing their prey, the mob in a few moments stormed the Bench and drove the Custos himself to flight! After this unparalleled performance, the Governor chartered a company of regular troops at St. Ann's Bay and suppressed disloyalty with a stern hand. The chief rioters were impeached by the Government; but such was the state of feeling amongst the white proprietors in Jamaica that the juries refused to entertain prosecutions of this nature, no matter what the evidence. The popular verdict was, however, unmistakable, and the defendants were roughly handled as they left the court.

By this time the power of the persecuting faction was broken; in the autumn of 1833 the Missionaries at St. Ann's, as elsewhere, resumed their work unmolested. The frantic violence of the planters had defeated its own end. The reports of their insolent lawlessness, their barbarous floggings and wholesale shootings of Negroes guilty of no crime, and the scurrilous and seditious outpourings of their press, disclosed to the world the demoralization effected by slave-holding in men of English blood. These manifestations steeled the resolve of Great Britain that the inhuman system upheld by such defenders should cease.

Four Circuit centres not yet named appear in the list of Jamaica Stations furnished by the *Minutes* of 1833. STONEY HILL stands about fifteen miles distant on the north road from Kingston. The military barracks planted there (which were subsequently removed to Newcastle, higher up the mountain) gave the place a prominence it no longer holds. In the earliest

they were cashiered. Bleby reports that the Lieutenant-Colonel of militia disgraced on this occasion, who had been an outrageous persecutor, underwent a change of sentiment and became a worshipper in the Methodist chapel erected on the ruins of that he had helped to destroy.

Circuit arrangements Stoney Hill was associated with Grateful Hill, situated further to the north ; when there was a shortage in the staff, these two Missions were reunited. In 1824 Grateful Hill Circuit received a couple of Missionaries, the second being posted at Stoney Hill. This was Robert Young, who commenced his labours in 1823 ; he succeeded in raising a thriving Society and chapel here, and evangelized the surrounding villages. The fine situation and salubrious air commended the residence ; Missionaries who suffered from the feverish heat of the plains found this spot a sanatorium. The planters and overseers of the neighbouring estates were better disposed than those in other districts of the island, while Methodism made strong friends amongst the soldiers of the cantonment. When Grimsdall succeeded to Young's charge in 1827, he reported 699 Church members and 132 on trial. In 1831-32 the negro membership was heavily reduced through the threatenings of the white overseers and the restraints put upon the slaves ; throughout the country Circuits Missionaries were forbidden to visit their people on the estates. But Mission property was not destroyed, nor preaching stopped, in this Circuit.

GRATEFUL HILL, overlooking St. Thomas's Vale, the paradise of Jamaica, is situated nearly half-way between Kingston and St. Ann's, to the north-west of Stoney Hill. The first Missionary visited this place in 1815, invited by a handful of residents in the vale who had heard Methodist preaching at Kingston. Two Society-classes were formed by the Preacher who came—one at Grateful Hill, the other, at Unity, four miles distant. In 1819 a chapel was built at Grateful Hill and a Preacher stationed there, with a flock of 257 Church members. Four years later the chapel had to be enlarged, and the Circuit counted a membership approaching 500. This was the enviable station of the District—the climate was healthful, the people kind and peaceable.

In their zeal the Grateful Hill Methodists held what seems to have been the earliest missionary meeting in Jamaica, which the Negroes crowded to excess ; they climbed on the chapel roof then under repair, through which those who could not find room inside witnessed the proceedings. The Chairman appealed for the sympathy of the assembly on every ground of gratitude :

You were miserable, ragged [he said] and without hope, before the Missionaries came; now, since they have come, you are happy, improved, and have a blessed hope of heaven. . . . Since we have so freely received, we ought freely to give, that the same blessings may be sent to other heathens which have been sent to us.

The sum of £5 was contributed in the collection, and £40 promised in yearly subscriptions. Here was a prompt and rich fruit of the grace of God, manifested in a people mostly very poor and preoccupied in paying for the enlargement of their own sanctuary. A little later Day Schools were started, chiefly through the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Whitehouse, both at Grateful Hill and Unity. The two Societies ran an equal race; from the double starting-point the Mission spread over a wide stretch of mountain and valley in the east-central parts of Jamaica. The first Unity Chapel was replaced by a larger structure, built in 1830 to hold 300 worshippers.

As at Stoney Hill, the work in the Grateful Hill Circuit amongst the Negroes was arrested at the insurrection through the groundless suspicions of the Whites. The Mission suffered many alarms and threatenings; but no worse injury befell it here. On the estates in this part of the country the slaves remained perfectly quiet. In 1826, when Grateful Hill and Stoney Hill became separate Circuits, they were credited with 725 and 699 members respectively; the former maintained its level. During the stormy days, so full of distress for their neighbours in west, north, and east, these sheltered Churches enjoyed something like the happiness of the nation which 'has no history.'

The Stations list of 1833 includes two other Circuits, lying in opposite directions. There was ORACABESSA,<sup>1</sup> a coast-settlement in the St. Mary's parish, twenty miles eastward from St. Ann's; to this place Port Maria, farther east, and Guy's Hill, to the south not far from Grateful Hill, were attached. The new Circuit grew out of the St. Ann's Mission, and made its first appearance in 1831; not till 1834, however, was Oracabessa favoured with a Missionary of its own, William Ritchie being the first appointed. Oracabessa Circuit shared with St. Ann's in the tribulations of 1832-33. At Guy's Hill the work of the Mission was commenced as far back as 1825,

<sup>1</sup> Later *Ocho Rios*, which lies between St. Ann's and Oracabessa, became the head of the Circuit, and this romantic Indian name disappeared.



when the Missionaries began to visit this spot from Belmont. Even earlier Guy's Hill had been stirred through the testimony of a slave named George Stanbury from Spanish Town, who was brought to God under Shipman's ministry, and came to see his father and friends living here. Stanbury was an able as well as an earnest man, and his exhortations were powerful for good. He was set upon, for the offence of preaching to slaves, at the orders of a neighbouring overseer, and hunted into the woods. Reappearing at Guy's Hill to renew his appeals, on the second occasion Stanbury was seized and put in irons; next morning he was sent to the House of Correction for unmanageable slaves. Unprincipled estate-managers dreaded every manifestation of ability and leadership amongst the Blacks; they resolutely combated all influences tending to inspire the bondsman with self-respect. For, as some of the masters did not scruple to admit, '*Knowledge is incompatible with slavery.*'<sup>1</sup>

At Ocho Rios, Miss Catherine Jarvis, the mulatto lady who had been prosecuted before the St. Ann's magistrates for praying audibly in her domicile, presented to the Mission a large house which was made into a commodious chapel. This sanctuary, along with that of Oracabessa, was burnt down by the Church Unionists in 1832. For many months Methodist worship at both places was carried on, with much discomfort and risk, in the open air. Nevertheless the work of God advanced; and so soon as persecution abated the Societies multiplied fast along this coast.

One Circuit more remains to be described—that of LUCEA and SAVANNA-LA-MAR—occupying the extreme west of the island<sup>2</sup>; it was designated by one or the other, sometimes

<sup>1</sup> The root of the quarrel between the planters and the Missionaries was laid bare in a trenchant article of the London *Times* newspaper of this date, commenting upon the published resolutions of the Colonial Church Union. 'It is well known,' says the writer, 'that the sectarian Missionaries who have gone forth from this country to preach Christianity to the Negroes have been for many years objects of extreme jealousy to what is called "the West Indian interest," and that no instance of insubordination or outrage has ever occurred throughout these colonies since the abolition of the slave-trade whence prompt occasion was not taken to charge the guilt of it upon the unfortunate Missionaries.' He asserts the demonstrated innocence of the accused, while he admits the inevitable tendency of the truths which Christian Missionaries teach to disturb a system of society based upon human slavery. Finally he reaches the following conclusion: 'The truth must be told. These planters will not suffer their slaves to emerge, by the avenue of knowledge of any description, from the level of the beast, to which a long course of degrading treatment has reduced them. If men be once educated, or even shown the road to education, however imperfectly, they will no longer endure the conditions of quadrupeds. The Jamaica planters are well aware of this. Their resolutions are worthy of their system.'

<sup>2</sup> The Savanna-la-Mar Circuit ranged eastwards as far as Black River. Between

by both of the above names, until its division into separate areas. Lucea, the capital of the parish of Hanover, stands on a little bay at the north-western corner of Jamaica; Savanna-la-Mar, in the Westmoreland parish, a commercial town of considerable size and respectability, fronts the south at a point about fifteen miles from its western extremity. These important centres were reached in the first instance by the Missionaries of Montego Bay, from which the latter town is nearly thirty miles off. Messrs. Barry and Box reconnoitred Savanna-la-Mar in 1829. The magistrates showed themselves friendly, and the tradespeople ready to hear the Gospel. Access was promised to several of the flourishing estates in the neighbourhood. A Society-class of twenty-four members was gathered and a hall secured for preaching in the town which would hold 300 people. William Box remained behind in Savanna-la-Mar, and laboured with energy and great success; he was followed in turn by William Crookes and Henry Bleby.

The slave-rising, which directly affected the parish of Westmoreland, stopped the Mission completely for the time. The anti-missionary agitation was hardly less violent here than on the north coast; at Savanna-la-Mar, however, the brunt of the persecution fell on the Baptist Mission, which preceded ours and had rooted itself strongly in the town and neighbourhood. The Church Union encountered opponents not less courageous than those of Montego Bay, if less numerous and powerful.

Henry Bleby, who along with William Ritchie and Peter Samuel started his missionary course in Jamaica about this time, was stationed at Lucea, and witnessed the outbreak of the rebellion in his Circuit. In his book, entitled *Death Struggles of Slavery*, he tells the story of it. Two years earlier, the Montego Bay Missionary, Peter Duncan, had annexed Lucea to his Circuit. Everything promised well for the Mission until the negro revolt, in which the entire neighbourhood of Lucea was involved. In this district the Baptist Mission, established now for some years, held a preponderant influence

this boundary and the Spanish Town Circuit, which pushed its operations to the west into Clarendon parish, Methodism had no settled station up to this time. The Manchester parish, with large areas of Clarendon and St. Elizabeth's east and west of it, and the smaller parish of Vere projecting to the south of Clarendon, appear to have been untouched by the Mission up to the date of Emancipation—that is, the whole south-centre of Jamaica, forming a coast-line of about sixty miles in length, with a wide hinterland. The rest of the island was now fairly covered by Methodist Circuits.

amongst the Negroes ; Methodists were few and scattered. Only at a later date, subsequently to Bleby's return to Lucea in 1836, did our Church acquire any considerable strength in the far west of Jamaica.

The rise of the insurrection Bleby traces<sup>1</sup> to Samuel Sharpe, <sup>2</sup> a negro slave of extraordinary intelligence, force of speech, and vigour of character, belonging to Montego Bay. This man had a good master and raised no complaint against him ; the owner's family showed their regard for Sharpe even when he was brought to the gallows. But he had come to loathe and scorn slavery for its own sake ; white men, he held, had no more right to enslave the Blacks than they to enslave the Whites ; for this belief he found his warrant in the Word of God. No race possessing many such men could be kept in servitude. Sharpe knew much of what was passing in England through the newspapers which fell in his way. Satisfied that the sympathies of the British nation were with his people, he was impatient of delay, and would have the bondmen hasten liberation by striking a blow on their own account.<sup>3</sup> He was a member of the Baptist Church and (as Bleby believes) a sincerely religious man, neither bloodshed nor arson was in his designs.<sup>4</sup> The method he proposed was, in the first instance, that of *passive resistance*. His plan was that the slaves should, after the Christmas holidays, simultaneously refuse any longer to work without wages. He persuaded himself that if the mass of the Negroes struck in this way, the planters would be brought to terms. Should they, on receiving notice, attempt to enforce further work without pay, then the slaves must fight for freedom.

<sup>1</sup> See *Death Struggles of Slavery*, &c., Chapter X.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Bleby evidently came under the spell of this extraordinary man, with whom he had long conversations in the condemned cell. He speaks of Sharpe as 'certainly the most intelligent and remarkable slave I ever met with.' Several times he heard Sharpe address his fellow prisoners on religious topics, and 'was amazed both at the power and freedom with which he spoke, and at the effect produced upon his auditory. He appeared to have the feelings and passions of his hearers completely at command.' Sharpe met his death on the scaffold with composure and unaffected dignity, concluding a manly address, in which he acknowledged his errors, with the words, 'I depend for salvation upon the Redeemer, who shed His blood upon Calvary for sinners.' Under other conditions Samuel Sharpe might have become a Toussaint l'Ouverture or a Booker Washington.

<sup>3</sup> Unquestionably the insurrection had this effect, furnishing the advocates of Abolition with a telling argument for its necessity. Without the knowledge of his pastors, Sharpe had used the Baptist Church-gatherings for the purpose of his propaganda.

<sup>4</sup> Bleby obtained from Sharpe and his associates during his interviews with them in the Montego Bay prison a full and consistent account of their plans and doings.

To induce the black people to rise, Sharpe and his confederates circulated two statements which he, at any rate, knew to be untrue: (1) that the masters were unlawfully suppressing the decree of freedom already issued by the King; and (2) that Mr. Burchell, a well-known Baptist Missionary then on furlough in England, had communicated the secret before leaving Jamaica and was on his way back with the Royal warrant in his hands. In the angry and violent talk of the masters,<sup>1</sup> who denounced not only the Abolitionists but the home Government and people, the slaves had overheard many things preparing them to credit Sharpe's story; every one believed the day of freedom to be near. The rumour he vouched for spread like wildfire and stirred the excitable Negroes to the verge of madness. In vain the Missionaries, to whose ears it came, strove to disabuse the people's minds. The slaves had no store of weapons gathered, no military preparations made; the subsequent inquisition unveiled no evidence of any concerted plan for the destruction of property, much less for the massacre of the white people.

Sharpe and his accomplices fired a train which exploded with effects beyond their calculation. Like many revolutionaries, the organizers of the slave-strike conjured up a monster they were powerless to control. Before Christmas Day an ominous collision took place near Montego Bay, through the resentment of a group of Negroes on a certain property against an outrage committed by the manager. At nightfall on December 26 fire blazed out from the sugar-works of Kensington, overlooking the town. As though this were a prearranged signal, flames rose in succession from plantation after plantation round the horizon, until the whole sky was one ruddy glare. Bleby, however, states that

The destruction of that property [Kensington] was the work of a few ungovernable spirits who, having broken into and plundered the rum-store, had become infuriated with liquor.<sup>2</sup> The example, once set, was rapidly and extensively followed.

The precise facts will never be known; but it is not difficult

<sup>1</sup> Bleby quotes on pages 131-33 of his *Death Struggles of Slavery*, evidence withheld from the Spanish Town Commission of Inquiry, which shows that 'the expectation of immediate freedom' had been raised in the minds of the slaves by the planters themselves.

<sup>2</sup> It must be remembered that Christmas-tide all over the West Indies was a time of holidays and licence for the Negroes, when they held great concourses, and drunkenness and wild escapades were customary.



to understand how at such a crisis, when the minds of the Negroes were at fever-pitch and filled with vague expectancy, one act of incendiarism prompted another automatically. The sugar-factory buildings, the sign of everything most hateful to the slaves, were highly combustible; to apply the torch was the work of a moment. The white people were allowed, and in many instances assisted by the Negroes, to escape unharmed in the early stage of the insurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Not [says an eye-witness] until the execution under martial law had commenced, did the rebels offer any violence to individuals; then, incensed by the cruel and reckless manner in which their friends were being put to death, they retaliated, and committed the atrocities of which undeniably they were guilty.

On the whole the black rebels showed a singular moderation.

When we consider the cruelties and oppression that had been previously exercised upon many of them, and the outrages against modesty and humanity perpetrated upon their mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters, wonder is not that their atrocities were so many, but that they were so few.

During the whole struggle hardly a dozen white folk perished, of soldiers and civilians together, while hundreds of Negroes were shot or hanged—scores of these unarmed and innocent, without trial or after a ghastly pretence of trial.

When the fires broke out the parish militia were called to arms and marched to the scene of destruction amongst the hills. The Colonel in command was the gentleman whose violence had occasioned the first negro outbreak in the vicinity; had this man possessed ordinary courage and competence, the rebellion would have been quelled in a couple of days. His force was attacked in the following night by a mob of 400 or 500 Negroes, formidable only in its shouts. The assailants

<sup>1</sup> Bleby illustrates the temper of the Blacks by relating the story, taken down from the victim's lips, of a proprietor living near the coast, who remained on his property several days after the rebellion broke out—a man who 'bore no very good name for kindness to his slaves,' whose 'head had grown grey in oppression and wickedness.' As the old planter sat down to dinner, a deputation of the slaves came in to say, 'Massa better go away!' They could not answer for his safety any longer; the Negroes round were determined to burn down his house and works. He remonstrated, and urged them to stand by him. They replied that they did not want to see him or his family harmed, and 'the sooner Massa go away the better.' Finding there was no alternative, he asked if he might take any of his property with him. 'Oh, yes! anything he chose to remove.' 'Would they help him to carry down his goods to the wharf?' 'Yes, but he must *pay* them now for their labour as free men!' To this the proud slave-holder would not submit, so he was told that the boat was ready, and he must be off with his family if they wished to escape with their lives. He left, and soon after the house and the surrounding buildings were committed to the flames. Vastly gentler measure was dealt out to the masters than they were used to deal to their serfs.

possessed a few muskets distributed amongst them ; for the rest, they were armed with stones and with the cutlasses used in the cane-fields. The assault was repelled with little difficulty, and the negro insurgent band was dispersing, when at daylight the Colonel beat a retreat from his secure position, thus abandoning the whole interior between Montego Bay and Savanna-la-Mar to the rebels. To head quarters he sent a cowardly report, to the effect that 10,000 rebels were in arms, the whole slave-population had risen, and every white man's life was in danger ! The dissemination of this false news went far to make it true ; a local strike, confined to a couple of parishes, and accompanied by incendiary fires more accidental than designed, was turned into a full-blown rebellion.

The retirement of the militia changed the despair of the rebels into jubilation. Roaming the country now unchecked, they roused their fellows in the adjoining parishes of Hanover and Westmoreland, who gathered into companies under extemporized leaders, and snatched up such arms as they could to defend the liberty which, they firmly believed, was legally theirs already. On the succeeding night the plantation fires were renewed upon a far larger scale ; for nearly a third of the island's length they blazed along the mountain-sides above the north coast—a lurid advertisement of the anarchy afoot. The Governor proclaimed martial law ; Sir Willoughby Cotton, the Commander-in-Chief, armed with plenary powers of suppression, hastened to Montego Bay. A force of British regulars was dispatched to support him. The wildest rumours went abroad, filling the country with panic and dismay ; the newspapers of the planter-party teemed with exaggeration and calumny, and breathed the most ferocious sentiments.

From first to last the insurrection, in a military sense, was contemptible ; this Sir Willoughby Cotton at once perceived. A humane and judicious man, as well as an able Commander, he issued soon after his arrival a proclamation inviting the slaves to return to their work, and giving the promise of pardon upon prompt obedience. Many of the revolters in their infatuation welcomed the soldiers, believing that the King was on their side and had sent his men to help them.<sup>1</sup> When they discovered

<sup>1</sup> The Negroes had some reason to suppose the soldiers to be their friends ; a few months earlier they had read in the *Jamaica Courant* : ' It is *whispered* that our brethren the British soldiers . . . have received secret orders to remain neutral, or to act against us (the planters) in the event of disturbance.'

their mistake, the bulk of them were ready at once to submit. To a large extent the purpose of the General's clemency was defeated by officers of militia bent upon revenge and brave when the danger was past, who fired upon the returning culprits or hurried them to death after a mock trial by court-martial. Cheated by the proffer of mercy, the poor wretches fled to the woods again, where Maroons were set on to hunt them down, stimulated by the bribe of a price *for every pair of human ears brought in*—'a premium upon murder!' These dishonourable doings Sir Willoughby Cotton was powerless to prevent. The massacres and atrocities were committed, in point of fact, not on the side of the black rebels, but of the white masters, whose oppression had often been such as might have goaded the meekest or feeblest of human creatures to rebellion.

The Christian Negroes proved very noticeably an element of restraint in this unhappy conflict. Never was there before a slave-rising animated by so little of the spirit of reprisals or blood-thirst. 'Not blood, plunder, or revenge was their object but simply *freedom*' (Bleby). The lives of hundreds of white people, including some of the vilest tyrants upon earth, were in the power of their slaves, from whom they suffered no bodily harm and little indignity. Many slaves strove hard to save their masters' property. In the whole course of the insurrection but two white men were actually murdered; not more than twenty of the Negroes were concerned, Bleby declares, in any act that could be called an atrocity. Many risked their lives by refusing to join the rebels; others were forced into the insurgent ranks, or carried along by the rebels as prisoners. Several of the latter were executed on capture by the Whites out of hand, with no attempt at discrimination.

Thomas Murray, who held his ground at Montego Bay through all the trouble, and Henry Bleby, his colleague at Lucea,<sup>1</sup> were able to testify that out of two or three thousand slaves associated with the Wesleyan Mission in the disturbed districts, not one suffered as a rebel; and the only Methodist known to have in any way abetted the insurgents was a man 'received on trial' a few days before the rioting began. Throughout the island, even where the Methodists had been

<sup>1</sup> These two Missionaries, apprehending that mischief was brewing, but with little idea of its magnitude, held a meeting to warn the country Methodists two days before the rising, at which 700 or more were present, who unanimously pledged themselves to keep clear of all disorderly proceedings.

most cruelly harassed and were most jealously watched, their conduct was unimpeachably loyal. The Major-General in command of the Montego Bay District publicly declared that 'nothing had occurred on which any charge could be founded against the Wesleyan Missionaries or their people.'

The military testimony was confirmed by that determined enemy of the Mission, the former *Courant* editor, A. H. Beaumont,<sup>1</sup> the gentleman who suffered defeat at the hands of John Barry in the famous libel action of 1829, who said in an outspoken speech before the House of Assembly :

The sectarian priests are like other persons, neither better nor worse ; they are no more guilty of the late insurrection than are the advocates of Reform in Parliament guilty of the conflagration in Bristol. As for the Methodists, they are certainly not concerned at all in the rebellion, for I never saw one of their sect apprehended : this is a fact worth a million of suspicions.

In another speech the same gentleman testified, 'appealing to many members of the House to confirm the statement,' that 'not one Wesleyan Methodist, of any cast or complexion, was concerned in the insurrection.' Referring to the Baptists who were 'numerous in the north-west parts of the island,' this unsparing critic says :

The worst the white preachers have done is no more than what many in the Established Church are accused of, and accused of on quite as good evidence—of addressing language to the slaves which was likely to be misunderstood and to inflame their minds. To perpetuate slavery [this Saul among the prophets tells the astonished slave-holders] you must not alone banish sectarian Ministers, you must stop the progress of civilization ; you must not barely fetter, you must destroy the Press ; you must cease to express your opinions in this House, at your public meetings, at your private tables ; you must be yourselves the worst of slaves in order to perpetuate slavery in others.

This discerning man, in spite of his sceptical animus, had got to the root of the matter. His protestation in the House of Assembly sounded the death-knell of slavery to the conscience of Jamaica.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Beaumont was a declared sceptic in religion, and opposed missionary effort on this account rather than from attachment to the Established Church, or even to the interests of the planters. Since his contest with Barry, severing his connexion with the *Courant* newspaper, he had visited England. He came back to tell the planters that slavery was doomed and they must set their house in order. Beaumont was decidedly the most able and enlightened politician Jamaica possessed at that time ; his defection from the pro-slavery party threw them into consternation.



William Burchell, the Baptist Minister who was quoted as the authority for the premature report of Emancipation circulated amongst the Negroes, landed near Montego Bay on his return from England, a few days after the rebellion began, wholly unaware of the use made of his name and the danger in which he consequently stood. He was thrown into prison, to await his trial at the Cornwall Assizes, along with Messrs. Gardner and Knibb, his Baptist colleagues in the parish. False information against the three Missionaries had been extorted by bribery and threats<sup>1</sup>; at the trial, the suborned witnesses disowned their incriminating evidence, and the plot recoiled upon its contrivers.<sup>2</sup> The Moravian Missionary, Pfeiffer, was court-martialled on the same charge of inciting the slaves to rebellion. The condemnation of this blameless and greatly respected man was all but secured, by means even more dastardly than those employed against the Baptist Ministers; the ill-usage he endured brought Pfeiffer to death's door.

No charge to the above effect was laid against any Methodist Preacher, but William Box suffered on suspicion a horrible imprisonment, while Thomas Murray, Henry Bleby, and others were attacked on kindred grounds. All classes of 'the sectarians' were hated and feared by the champions of slavery. No sooner was the insurrection over than the House of Assembly, convened by Lord Belmore, appointed a Committee 'to inquire into and report the cause of the late rebellion, and the amount of property destroyed.'<sup>3</sup> The report of this Committee, based upon a prejudiced and defective examination of

<sup>1</sup> In the case of one of the witnesses for the prosecution, the following dialogue took place ('published in Jamaica,' writes Bleby, 'soon after the insurrection; its truth was never called in question'): Dr. T., at Lucea, addressing a negro prisoner, said: 'Did not Mr. Burchell tell you to rebel?' Prisoner: 'No, sir.' Dr. T.: 'Tell me the truth, confess that he told you so, or I'll blow your brains out!' clapping the muzzle of a pistol to the man's head. Moved by so urgent an appeal, the prisoner retracted his previous denial of Mr. Burchell's guilt and made answer: 'Hi, for true, Massa! Me just 'member! Night before him go away, him tell we sintingtan so (he told us something of that kind)'—a sample of the doings of Jamaican militia-officers and Church Unionists at this crisis!

<sup>2</sup> On his discharge, Burchell was assaulted with deadly intent by the white mob outside the court-house; his life was saved only through the personal and fearless intervention of the Hon. Mr. Tuckett, the acting Chief Justice.

<sup>3</sup> The estimate of the Committee fixed the total damage, including the market value of the slaves killed, at about two-thirds of £1,000,000. More than half the destruction took place in St. James's parish, about Montego Bay; the rest chiefly in Hanover parish, to the west; Westmoreland and St. Elizabeth's, southwards, suffered comparatively little; the injury done in Trelawney was trifling. No other parish enters into the computation.

the evidence,<sup>1</sup> laid the blame, first, upon 'the evil excitement created in the minds of our slaves generally by the unceasing and unconstitutional interference of His Majesty's Ministers with the local Legislature in regard to the passing of laws for their Government'; on the expressions concerning West Indian slavery reported as proceeding from British Ministers of State and members of the House of Commons, and the effect of recent Parliamentary discussions, 'coupled with the false and wicked reports of the Anti-slavery Society.' England herself, with her sentimental prating about freedom, was, in fact, the chief culprit! The more immediate cause of the rising was 'the delusive expectation produced amongst the whole of the slave population,' amid the general unrest due to the ferment in England, 'that they were to be free after Christmas.' Thirdly, along with the above incentives to revolt, there operated 'the mischievous abuse of the system adopted by different religious sects in the island termed Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists, and Moravians,' who recognize 'gradations of rank' amongst their converts, 'whereby the less ambitious and more peaceable are made the dupes of the artful and intelligent.' That slaves should be called 'Leaders,' 'Elders,' and the like, how shocking! The intelligence, self-respect, and capacity for leadership developed in the Negro by Christianity and the spiritual responsibilities it entails—these signs of a moral awakening and a new manhood were the chief cause of the slave-holders' guilty apprehensions. Finally, the unsettlement of the Negroes is traced to 'the preaching and teaching of the religious sects called Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists, and Moravians (but more particularly the sects termed Baptists),<sup>2</sup> which had the effect of producing in the minds of the slaves a belief that they could not serve both a spiritual and a temporal master.' The acknowledgement of a Divine Master had raised the Negroes spiritually above their temporal masters, and

<sup>1</sup> Bleby roundly affirms that the written testimony obtained by Murray and himself, with the assistance of a Baptist Minister, from negro and coloured prisoners at Montego Bay for the purpose of this inquiry under instructions from the Custos of the parish, which laid bare the whole genesis of the insurrection, was *burked* by those who should have transmitted it; some members of the Committee were unaware even of its existence! 'It tended,' he declares, 'to remove the blame of causing the revolt from the Missionaries and to fix it upon the foolish proceedings of the colonists themselves; and therefore it was dishonestly kept back.'

<sup>2</sup> The gentry of Jamaica affected the old contemptuous Anglican style, then growing obsolete in England, of referring to Dissenters as a kind of obscure and noxious pest to be mentioned with nose upturned and a shrugging of the shoulders!

hindered, or even forbade, compliance with the godless and licentious demands that were often made upon them.

On the reception of the report in the Assembly, various proposals were made for the restraint or removal of the obnoxious Missionaries. Nothing came of them. The patent falseness of the Committee's findings, and their insolence toward the mother country and the Royal Government, sufficiently condemned them. This proved almost the last act of a Legislature which represented little more than the passions of a narrow and ignorant caste, brutalized by long possession of despotic power.

The Churches denounced in the above report took on its publication immediate steps to clear themselves. The Wesleyans held at Kingston a meeting of Ministers, Stewards, and Leaders, on May 10, at which a string of resolutions was drawn up, traversing the aforesaid imputations. The Methodists were assured of their integrity in the eyes of the public of Jamaica; but an official impeachment endorsed by the Legislature would remain permanently in evidence, and persons at a distance unacquainted with the local circumstances might suppose, if no formal contradiction were forthcoming, that judgement had gone against the accused by default. Moreover, the same reproaches were being hurled at the Missionaries with unmeasured violence week by week in the columns of the two most widely circulated newspapers of the colony. A reply was therefore expedient, and expected. The signatories of the Methodist protest declare that they have read the report of the Committee of Inquiry 'with surprise and indignation.' They repudiate the accusation laid against them and their co-religionists of instigating and abetting rebellion as being 'utterly false and unfounded'; it amounts to 'a gross calumny upon the Wesleyan Body.' 'Conscious,' the protestors go on to say, 'of their own innocence, and of the praiseworthy conduct of the members of their Societies in the island during the late disturbance,' they repel, 'in the most public and solemn manner,' before the people both of Jamaica and of Great Britain, the charges of disloyalty to the Crown and the civil State; they express their indignation that such an attack on their character should have been made, and in such a place, without any opportunity of self-defence afforded them. The Ministers involved 'appeal to the

thousands of their hearers throughout the island ' as to whether ' the teaching of the Wesleyan Methodists is calculated,' as the report alleges, ' to mislead the minds of the slaves on the subject of "lawful authority." ' "

A point of no small interest arises, upon which one could wish the protest had been more decided. In Resolutions II. and VIII. the Wesleyan remonstrance minimizes and half apologizes for the promotion of *slaves* to office in the Societies. ' Nearly all the Leaders,' it is said, ' are respectable<sup>1</sup> free persons ; most of them are themselves owners of slaves.' This was doubtless true in point of fact ; but there is a touch of snobbishness—not to say of deference to slavery—in the manner in which it is put. The question was one of principle, and the relative number of slave or free Class-leaders is beside the mark. It would have been worthier in Methodists to glory, as did the fathers of the Early Church, in the raising of slaves to ecclesiastical honour ; the protestors should rather have insisted, with holy pride, upon the truth that for the brotherhood of the redeemed ' there is no barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman ; but Christ is all, and in all.' Few things were more essential to the progress of the Gospel, and the laying of sure foundations for the Church of God in a country where White and Black were mixed, than the clear repudiation of distinctions of race and colour and worldly privilege as barriers between man and man within the Christian fellowship. Nothing but personal worth, spiritual capacity, and the signs of Divine vocation should count in the allocation of office to the several members of the Body of Christ. The remonstrance afforded an opportunity for witnessing to this principle which might perhaps have been turned to braver account.

The emphatic protest we have summarized was presented to the Governor in the name of the 17 Ministers and 446 Leaders of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Jamaica, and was simultaneously published in three of the principal newspapers of the island. These Kingston Resolutions were also transmitted to the Missionary Committee in London, to be by that body presented to His Majesty the King, and to be made use of in Great Britain for the defence of Methodism in such ways as should be deemed most advantageous. This

<sup>1</sup> Never did there breathe Christian men or women more ' respectable,' in every worthy sense of the word, than some of the slave Leaders in the Methodist Societies of Jamaica.



manifesto answered its purpose. The slanderous report soon fell into oblivion ; the storm of reviling and calumny which the pro-slavery faction had for many years poured on the Missionaries of the Gospel in Jamaica and the West Indies had spent itself.

With the slave-insurrection of Christmas, 1831, and the ' trials of cruel mockings and scourgings,' the false accusations, imprisonments, and butcheries that ensued, the Mission of the Gospel to the black people of Jamaica arrived at its Calvary. Emancipation was the immediate sequel, bringing the dawn of a new day—a day in its turn to be overcast by dark clouds and occupied with hard and wearying tasks.

## V

### THE LEEWARD ISLANDS UNTIL EMANCIPATION

West Indian ' Districts '—Advantages in the smaller Islands—The Course of Events in Antigua—A Moral Collapse—Recovery—The wreck of the *Maria*—St. Christopher and Tortola—William Shrewsbury—Special Difficulties in Dominica—Continuous Increase—St. Bartholomew—The Gospel self-sown in Anguilla—A Christian Laity—Montserrat.

MUCH of what has been related in the last two chapters concerning the course of missionary affairs in Jamaica during the years before emancipation applies to the smaller West Indian islands ; we may, therefore, tell their story for the same period more briefly. Difference of size and situation and natural character, of racial and political constitution, caused many variations within the general resemblance. The grouping of the Lesser Antilles into the Leeward and Windward Islands, forming the Antigua and St. Vincent Districts respectively,<sup>1</sup> dictates the order to be pursued. To the original Districts there came to be added in 1811 the Bahamas District ; that of Jamaica was formed in 1816. A couple of Missionaries were sent to Demerara (British Guiana) in 1814. This Mission remained until the close of our present period attached to the nearest Island Synod. Haiti, or S. Domingo, first appears on the Stations of 1815 ; but Methodist work there for long held a precarious footing, and down to 1833 the Haitian Stations were as often vacant as they were occupied. The Mission in Honduras, commenced in 1825, was in its early stages under the oversight of the Chairman of Jamaica, since this island had considerable intercourse with the Honduras coast. The Bermuda Mission, dating from 1798, was associated

<sup>1</sup> In the earliest division, made in 1806, ' Antigua ' and ' St. Christopher ' were the two District centres, St. Vincent and the other Windward Missions going with the former. By the year 1811 the St. Vincent Circuit had grown important enough to head a new district, formed out of the Windwards. Next year St. Christopher and St. Vincent, with their dependants, were thrown into the single Antigua District. On this footing matters remained until 1818, when a redivision was adopted, which became permanent, on the lines stated above.

for a short time with Antigua, afterwards with the Bahamas Synod.

The fact that Jamaica is a large country, in which Methodism spread continuously, gave to the Mission Circuits there a common complexion and solidarity of interest imperfectly realized amongst small and scattered islands. In Jamaica the Missionaries itinerating from Circuit to Circuit were not lost sight of by the people they left behind, as might have happened in moving from island to island ; the Connexional sense was strong in the District, and men of mark, such as Shipman and Barry, acquired general influence and a public reputation which were elements of power in the life of the Church. On the other hand, the anti-missionary forces were organized on the wider field of Jamaica as they could not be elsewhere, so that they presented here their most formidable front. Persecution was more sustained in this part of the West Indies than anywhere else ; its weapons were sharper and more various ; the principles at issue were brought out more clearly, and the victories gained were correspondingly more decisive and resounding.

At the same time the Missionaries working in the other Districts possessed advantages not to be overlooked. The estates ran smaller in the smaller islands, and cultivation was more varied. This was especially the case in the Bahamas, where the sugar interest and the factory system of production did not predominate ; the proprietors were commonly men of moderate means, who managed their own property and dwelt among their servants. Under these circumstances slavery was milder, and society more agreeable ; men lived on neighbourly terms ; magistrates were more affable and reasonable, the Governor and public officials more accessible. The Missionary, if he were a man of tact and of superior gifts, and he stayed long enough to do it, might put his mark upon the whole island community ; he might become indeed a father to the people. With health and favouring conditions, the life of a pastor on one of the lesser islands was sometimes peculiarly honoured and happy. Where, as in some instances, masters were humane and enlightened, and Missionaries were suited to their work and at home in it, while the black people, with their native gaiety of heart, continued in the first delight of their knowledge of salvation, slavery lost its repulsive features. A passing visitor might

be excused for thinking it, under these ameliorative conditions, a natural patriarchal mode of life, adapted to the climate and the mode of cultivation, necessary to the disposition of the negro race.

To the Leeward Isles, which form the north-western group of the Lesser Antilles, belonged the three most flourishing Missions founded by Dr. Coke. ANTIGUA, the mother-island of West Indian Methodism, contained a Methodist Church membership exceeding 2,400; the total Wesleyan constituency amounted then to nearly 10,000—a third of the population. The Moravian Church counted about the same number of black and coloured adherents. Two-thirds of the entire people had become subject to the Gospel; it might be said that Antigua was already evangelized. Churches so successful had passed, surely, beyond the missionary stage, and must be reckoned amongst settled Christian communities; they should be competent to maintain their own ministry and manage their local affairs. The servile state of the bulk of the new converts forbade any such inference. For generations they were doomed to a spiritual dependence due to their material subjection; when the shackles of civil bondage had dropped from their limbs, the moral features and effects of servitude would long remain visible. This continued burden any Church which undertakes the Christianization of a slave-race must expect to find incumbent. The preaching and catechizing of the Missionary might make the eager, child-like black man 'wise unto salvation'; but his instructions left wanting the secular knowledge which fits a man for the business of the Church as for that of the world; rarely was this imparted while slavery continued. The servitude of the Negro was mental as well as physical, differing in this respect from the slavery characteristic of the ancient pagan world. The Negro's ignorance produced a childish mentality, an inconsiderateness and fecklessness, consistent with powerful affections and virtuous dispositions and an essentially spiritual temper, but disabling him for self-government either in State or Church. That the West Indian Blacks received the word of the Gospel joyfully and yielded freely the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit—the love, joy, peace that He implants, the meekness, patience, fortitude of Christian martyrdom—and, for all that have remained, as a body, mere babes in Christ requiring to be nursed and provided for by the



parent Church to this present day, is a disappointing experience ; but it is an experience accordant with the laws of human nature, which does not forbid the hope that the race will ultimately grow to Christian manhood. The problem was presented to Methodism in Antigua in its acutest form, since it was here that the conversion of the slaves first began on a considerable scale, and the consequent betterment was most manifest.

In 1793 Dr. Coke left John Baxter and William Warrener, the two seniors of his staff in charge, at Antigua. Under their direction Methodist work steadily progressed ; the island was covered with Societies, which were regulated with a vigilant and kindly discipline. Warrener was compelled to retire to England in 1797 ; Baxter remained as Superintendent, with the interval of a year's furlough spent at home, until his death ten years later. He was borne to his grave with universal sorrow and reverence. For twenty-two years he had ministered the salvation of Christ to people of all conditions and colours ; by his teaching and example he had effected reformation and diffused a happiness throughout the community such as few men in any sphere are privileged to witness. He is the ever-to-be-remembered 'Daddy Baxter' of West Indian Methodism.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of Baxter's death the Circuit reported a Church membership of 2,900 ; two or three years earlier the number had exceeded 3,500. Letters from Edward Turner and George Johnston, who came out from England in 1804-05 as young Missionaries to assist Baxter, show that about this time a decline and a backsliding took place from the early fervour of Antigua Methodism. The number of Ministers was increased by the end of the century to three, at which figure it remained, with temporary diminutions, until 1821, when it was permanently increased to four, the Church membership at that date being 3,912. For two years (1825-27) the island was divided into the Antigua West and Antigua East Circuits, with five Missionaries between them ; the division of authority within so confined an area proved disadvantageous, and the two Circuits were reunited. In point of Church membership, Antigua reached its high-water mark in 1823, when it stood at the figure of 4,560.

<sup>1</sup> John Baxter remained to the end the simple, sturdy evangelistic pioneer of his early lay ministry ; he appears to have been less equal to the responsibilities of the extensive pastoral management devolving upon him with advancing years.

The high-tide of this period was due to a wave of revival which in 1822 lifted all the Societies and reanimated the religious life of the island. For some years before that date there had been signs of steady improvement. The Church recovered from the deep depression it had undergone in 1811-12. A scandal unexampled in the history of West Indian Methodism occurred here at that date. A Missionary of sixteen years' standing, held in such esteem with his brethren that he was placed in the superintendency of the Antigua Circuit and the chair of the District, became the slave of strong drink. The descent was gradual, and his bad example and lax administration wrought mischief long before the crisis came. Becoming, through his wife, entangled in slavery, he had yielded to the force of the evil associations into which he was thus brought.<sup>1</sup> Things went from bad to worse, until 'his house became a bedlam and his rule anarchy.' Had he held a subordinate position, the transgressor would doubtless have been earlier called to account; *quis custodiet custodes?* Soon after his expulsion the fallen Missionary died.

Nothing could have been more disastrous than this man's moral collapse. A colleague writes in January, 1812 :

It is probable there never was a greater change for the worse in any Methodist Society than in the once flourishing Society of the town of St. John's. . . . I am surprised that matters are not worse when I reflect on what has occurred within the last two or three years.

The new Superintendent found Leaders in office who for years had been living in sin while they ostentatiously served the Church, and the better sort driven from the Society ! So low may a Methodist Church sink where its Minister is an unfaithful man ; but it has the power by self-examination and prompt discipline to 'recover itself out of the snare of the devil.' Such a recovery took place in Antigua, though 'the seeds of discord and confusion sown by Satan' long continued to spring up, to

<sup>1</sup> The Antigua Mission was peculiarly unfortunate in its pastors at this period. A young colleague of the lapsed Minister above referred to shortly afterwards had to be deposed for grave misconduct, imputed in his case to the influence of an ungodly wife. On his exclusion this man took a house in St. Vincent near to the Wesleyan Chapel for purposes of opposition ; but he soon discredited himself. The previous Superintendent, moreover, had become involved through marriage in slave-holding. He was an able, popular man, and no public scandal touched his name ; but his ministry, soon after removal from Antigua, came under a sudden and total eclipse. Never in the whole course of Methodist Missions was there known at any other point such a constellation of 'wandering stars' as occurred just then in the Antigua District.

the Church's vexation. The country Societies, notwithstanding the neglect they had suffered, were in a healthier state than the town. The settlement of Parham, where the younger Minister now lived, had become a tower of strength. A Missionary working here about this date writes of his visiting regularly thirty plantations in the neighbourhood.

Samuel Pool Woolley, who succeeded to the offices of Superintendent and District Chairman, was then barely through his probation. He was, however, thirty years of age, and his firmness of character, strength of judgement, and strict fidelity proved equal to the task. In the three years that Woolley 'travelled' the Antigua Circuit Methodist discipline was re-established, and the shaken credit of the Mission restored. In 1812, remaining in Antigua, he gladly yielded the chair of the Synod to the super-excellent George Johnston. Woolley took up the reins at a later time, and was counted amongst the most reliable Chairmen on the West Indian staff.

The course of Thomas Morgan, who succeeded to the care of the Antigua Mission, was nearly parallel to that of Samuel Woolley. In 1810 he entered the West Indian work, and returned to England in 1831, dying two years later. The effect of Woolley's and Morgan's pastorate in Antigua was bracing and restorative. Writing in 1815, the latter deploras the recurrent cases of immorality, the chronic trouble of West Indian discipline, but testifies his joy in the abundant fruit his work is yielding; the zeal and affection of the country Negroes was particularly delightful. The recovery of the Antigua Mission from the blow it had received five years earlier is shown by the increase in the Church membership, which in 1815 stood at 3,177. The old St. John's Chapel, built by John Baxter, was enlarged at a cost of nearly £2,000, in order to contain its increased congregation.

The reports from Antigua for a succession of years continued to be gratifying. In 1820 the Circuit formed, at St. John's and English Harbour, its own Missionary Society in furtherance of the conversion of the heathen; the rest of the District followed suit. The Superintendent writes:

I believe that this has been productive of more good to the cause of religion in this island than the establishment of any other institution whatever.

The same man reports the testimony of a plantation-manager, not a Methodist, given in the following words :

Most of the slaves on this estate are in your Society ; and I am happy to say that they are very exemplary. A great change has taken place in their conduct since they began to think for themselves and to act from religious principle. We scarcely ever use *the whip* now ; it is not needful.

This was no isolated piece of evidence. Amongst the estate-owners of Antigua were a Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, who are spoken of as ' appearing among their slaves more like parents than proprietors.' The worthy couple built a Wesleyan chapel at Zion Hill for the Blacks of their own and adjoining properties ; they even provided for their dependants a Maternity Hospital, which Mrs. Taylor personally supervised. A new conscience and spirit was being awakened in the slave-holders of the West Indies.

The revival of 1822 brought renewed prosperity to the Methodism of the island ; spiritual quickening and enlargement were followed by growth in the resources and improvement in the plant of the Church. A London gentleman who visited Antigua after twenty-five years' absence was struck by the signs of moral advance visible in the slaves, and recognized its cause in the evangelical labours of the Missionaries.

At the height of its satisfaction the Mission was plunged into sorrow by a calamity, happening on February 28, 1826, which swept away at a stroke its entire missionary staff. The five Ministers of the two Circuits then existing were returning home from the Synod held at St. Kitts,<sup>1</sup> when the *Maria* mail-boat which carried them struck on a reef as she was nearing St. John's harbour, and broke her back. Three of them were accompanied by their wives, and two of these by their children ; a couple of servants were also of the party. Out of the fourteen one only was saved, Mrs. Jones, wife of the youngest of the Missionaries, who lived long afterwards to tell the sad tale.<sup>2</sup> Lights on the shore and the movements of people were visible from the spot where the

<sup>1</sup> This gathering was saddened by the death of William Gilgrass, now amongst the oldest and certainly amongst the most useful and esteemed of West Indian Missionaries.

<sup>2</sup> This lady subsequently remarried in England, to become the mother of the late well-known Major Thomas W. Hincksman of Lytham, a munificent helper of the Missions.



huddled refugees clung, lashed by the waves, without food or shelter. Though making every signal in their power, they were unobserved either from the beach or from passing vessels, until on the third day the singular appearance of the rock on which they were fixed attracted some one's notice, and rescue came, just in time to save the life of the one who proved most enduring.<sup>1</sup>

The last seven years before Emancipation were comparatively uneventful for Methodism in Antigua. The one disturbing occurrence of this period was the riot of the slaves in 1831, caused by an Act of the local Legislative suppressing the Sunday market. This institution, universal in the slave colonies, was due to the fact that Sunday, being the weekly holiday of the plantation-labourers, was the only opportunity afforded them to sell the produce raised in their gardens and to buy their little stock of necessaries. Pleasure was combined with business at the rendezvous, and Sabbath desecration was carried to the highest pitch ; the negro markets were the busiest scenes in the islands. The Missionaries did their utmost to repress the scandal and to check its moral mischiefs, but so long as the Sabbath was the one day available for the black people to attend to their own affairs the practice was inevitable. The attempt to put it down by force was met with resistance culminating in scenes of bloodshed. The Missionaries took no part in the measures of repression ; but their preaching against Sunday traffic involved them in the odium excited against the white rulers. When the Negroes were set free, they were readily persuaded to change the market-day from Sunday to Saturday.

In 1833 Mr. John Gilbert died, the last notable descendant of the family which introduced Methodism to the West Indies. He and his wife had been from the days of John Baxter the chief supporters of the Mission at English Harbour. Mr. Gilbert was a useful Local Preacher ; Mrs. Gilbert, along with her sister, started the first Sunday School in the West Indies, which was opened at English Harbour in 1809. This School was the nursery of negro education in Antigua. The sister

<sup>1</sup> The fate of the captain of the *Maria* Jacob Grimshaw, a young Missionary then on the field, described in a poem as a judgement upon him for assisting at the destruction of the Barbados Chapel three years earlier—a participation credited to the unfortunate man on hearsay evidence, and indignantly denied by his friends. The author was threatened with an action for libel ; the anti-missionary newspapers made much capital out of the incident.

associated with Mrs. Gilbert in the above undertaking was Mrs. Thwaites, the most distinguished Methodist lady of the island,<sup>1</sup> who assisted her schoolmaster husband to lay the foundations of a system of religious instruction for the slaves of Antigua. Mr. and Mrs. Thwaites laboured in this way for many years before the Act of Emancipation, aided by a circle of enlightened proprietors and under the auspices, simultaneously or successively, of the Moravian, Wesleyan, and Anglican Churches. The superior condition of the slaves of Antigua at the time of Emancipation was attributed in the first place to the long-continued labours of the Missionaries for their benefit, and in the second place to the educational work of Mr. and Mrs. Thwaites.

In 1793 St. CHRISTOPHER stood second to Antigua in the list of West Indian Methodist Missions ; this prominence was retained to the end of the present period.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in 1833 St. Kitts surpassed Antigua, which in point of size is half as large again, in Methodist membership. The membership-census of both Circuits reached a maximum about 1803, and declined heavily in the course of the next ten years—partly through actual backsliding and partly through improved discipline.<sup>3</sup> In each instance a favourable reaction set in after the declension, which reached its lowest point in 1813 ; the next twenty years were marked by sustained growth and consolidation. The fluctuations of St. Kitts Methodism were more moderate than those observed in Antigua. The Society regularly employed three Missionaries in the island. Occasionally

<sup>1</sup> These two talented and philanthropic sisters were Ann and Elizabeth Hart. Their aunt, Mrs. Cable, of St. Kitts, was one of Dr. Coke's supporters in that island ; she removed later to Antigua. 'A woman of masculine understanding, of great uprightness and decision of character, with much suavity of manner and cheerfulness of spirit,' Mrs. Cable exercised a determining influence on the character of the nieces. Elizabeth (Mrs. Thwaites), the younger of the two, was much attached in early life to the Moravians. She established, before her marriage, a private school of her own, and was undoubtedly a very skilful teacher. An outspoken Abolitionist in a community of slave-holders—herself a slave-holder's daughter—she was held notwithstanding in respect and friendship on all hands, and esteemed a universal benefactress. This lady died in 1833—a highly gifted, deeply pious, indefatigably zealous, and benevolently happy woman.

<sup>2</sup> When the West Indian Districts were first marked out, in 1806, St. Christopher was made the head of a District of its own, including Nevis, Tortola, and the Virgin Islands. But this arrangement was discontinued after a few years.

<sup>3</sup> The judicious William White ascribed much of the declension above-noted to indulgence toward laxity of marriage-customs on the part of the first Missionaries amongst the Negroes. They judged that the condition of the slaves rendered the strict observance of the Christian law impracticable in their case, and that allowance must be made for this. White held with the younger Missionaries in insisting inflexibly on the New Testament standard of morality. This view prevailed, after considerable discussion.

life. He is described as 'tender, sympathetic, affectionate, in labours more abundant'—the 'active and honoured Chairman of his District' in the last period of his Mission. Only once during his long term of foreign service did Whitehouse return home. His health broke down in fever-stricken Dominica, and he sought recuperation by a voyage to the United States. Thinking himself better, he returned; but the malady recurred with fatal results, and he died at St. Kitts in January, 1833.

John Willis and James Whitworth travelled the St. Kitts Circuit together in 1810-11—the latter fresh from England, the former completing his probation. Both were of the best type of West Indian Missionary—patient, gentle, diligent, firm, and faithful; Willis possessed marked ability and culture. Each returned to England with impaired health after nine years' work in the tropics; Whitworth subsequently laboured for a while in South Africa. Both reached a good old age, and were serviceable at home in their mature years—Willis eminently so. Contemporary with these was John Raby,<sup>1</sup>—a close friend of Whitworth's and a man of superior mind and eminent holiness who spent seven years on this field, travelling in St. Kitts from 1812 to 1814. Charles Janion—amongst the choicest of the West Indian staff in the twenties (1819-27)—devoted a third of his short missionary career to this island. Wherever he moved, Janion left behind him respect and gratitude. William Clough, who somewhat later gave eight years to the islands, commenced and closed his course in St. Kitts. Devout in spirit, clear and persuasive in pulpit utterance, sympathetic and discerning in his pastoral care, Clough was particularly useful in preparing the Negroes for the approaching liberty. Robert Hawkins must have been a favourite at St. Kitts, for he 'travelled' there four distinct times between 1829 and 1848, and retired on the same island for a two years' interval of rest. Hawkins was one of the few Missionaries who became thoroughly acclimatized to the West Indies. His first two years of labour were spent on the River Gambia. In 1828 he was transferred to Antigua, and died in 1875, after fifty-two years of ministry, at St. Bartholomew, where he had been Supernumerary, but effective pastor, for the last nine years. He laboured in turn in every Circuit of the

<sup>1</sup> John Raby was the father of a more distinguished son—the late Dr. John Marsden Raby, for many years head master of the Woodhouse Grove School.

Antigua District ; quiet efficiency and steadfastness marked his work through this long lapse of time. Matthew Banks,<sup>1</sup> for nine years (1827-36) a most effective Missionary, served during his apprenticeship in St. Kitts (1828-29). Power and thoroughness were stamped on his frame and features ; he was ' quick and decisive in action, independent in judgement, and an original thinker, fervent in his Protestantism, and eminently successful in awakening sinners.'<sup>2</sup>

In reviewing the catalogue of St. Kitts Missionaries during the forty years covered by this chapter, one is struck by the high level of character and talent they displayed, to which the disposition of the Church fairly corresponded. One notices also that, while the missionary death-rate in the lesser islands (excepting Dominica and Grenada) decreased from that prevailing in the first stage of the work, and was lower than in Jamaica, where persecution was continuous and often severe, the average length of service remained lamentably short ; most of the men became disabled within the first ten years. The labour was excessive and dangerous exposure frequent ; the art of safeguarding life in the tropics was ill understood. The high rate of casualties aggravated the disadvantages which isolated Churches suffered from the Methodist itinerant system.

In TORTOLA, the British capital of the cluster of VIRGIN ISLANDS, William Hammet had the same astonishing success as in St. Kitts. In 1793 the Tortola Circuit counted 1,496 Church members, out of a total population (in the British Virgin Islands) of 8,000, seven-eighths of whom were slaves.

<sup>1</sup>This remarkable man was uncle to the late Dr. John Shaw Banks. The writer was a child when Matthew Banks ' travelled ' (1854-57) at Matton with James Findlay and Charles Garrett for junior colleagues, but remembers distinctly his tall and portly figure and impressive aspect, as he appeared at that date.

<sup>2</sup>We have read many Missionaries' unprinted journals, but none quite so charged with evidence of the convicting and converting powers of the Holy Ghost as that of Matthew Banks. Here is a characteristic entry : ' Preached in the evening from " Why will ye die ? " . . . My views of God's power and will to save, and of the follies of the impenitence and obstinacy of sinners, gathered strength as I proceeded, till I felt as though I was so armed with Divine power as to be able to shake the congregation. . . . There was indeed a shaking among the dry bones ! In the pews, benches, and aisle, all seemed broken down together. The crowd in the chapel-yard . . . listened in deathlike silence till, overwhelmed by the Divine presence, some fell to the ground, and others cried aloud and wrung their hands in deep distress ; others were praising God. The feeling outside was as strong as within.' The following record reveals the Missionary's intrepid spirit and his ruling passion : ' On the morning of November 30, about five minutes before three o'clock, we had the most alarming shock of earthquake that has been felt in this Island in the memory of man. . . . When I awoke and heard the rattling of the timbers, and felt the earth shaking so violently, I first inquired, " Where is now my God ? " and, finding myself on a rock that cannot be shaken, my fears for personal safety vanished. And hearing the voices of sinners crying for mercy, I could not but praise God for the alarm and cry " My God, shake their hearts ! " '



Almost the whole body of the Tortola Negroes was affected by the Mission. The Moravians laboured with great success at the important harbour of St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> and in adjoining Danish Islands ; outside the sphere of their influence the area of the Virgin Isles was destitute of religious ordinances when Methodism arrived. At first the Methodist preaching seemed to carry everything before it. By the year 1796 above 3,000 black folk were gathered into the Society—wellnigh half the slave population. In no other West Indian locality—scarcely anywhere else in the world—did Methodism become so largely and suddenly a mass-movement. But relapse is apt to follow wholesale conversion. In 1797 the above figure was reduced in the official report to something over 1,300 ; next year it was doubled again ! Discrimination and effective discipline were immensely difficult for a couple of Missionaries dealing with thousands of ignorant Negroes pressing into the Church under a wave of sympathetic excitement, especially when the individual Ministers stayed so short a time upon the ground. The Tortola membership continued to show exceptional fluctuations ; expulsions on account of immorality were rife in the early years. By degrees the work extended to the numerous little patches of rocky land studding the ocean round Tortola, until all the inhabited islets within the British province<sup>2</sup> stood upon the Tortola Circuit Plan. A Missionary writes :

Travelling here is performed chiefly by water, and is both difficult and dangerous. To be tossed about in a small open boat, while almost every wave is ready to overwhelm it, appears strange to those unaccustomed to it. But the love of souls surmounts every difficulty.

Attempts were made to include the important centre of St. Thomas and Santa Cruz. Methodists were constantly visiting the former flourishing port, and many settled there, but the Danish authorities interposed an obstinate veto. The Moravians at St. Thomas supplied to the best of their power the lack of Methodist service.

In January, 1806, an incident occurred which exasperated

<sup>1</sup> This was the Foreign Mission of the *Unitas Fratrum*, commenced in 1732, which has proved all along one of the most successful. The Danish Government took kindly to this simple people, who established a small colony of their own here and morally reclaimed the island.

<sup>2</sup> A number of these tiny islands were taken over by the British Government from the Danes about the year 1810.

the white people against the Mission and hindered its work for a time. John Brownell, the very energetic Superintendent, had written a letter to the well-known Joseph Butterworth, of London, in which he reflected with just severity upon the profligate life of Englishmen in Tortola. This letter was incautiously published, and found its way into some West Indian newspaper. The consequence was that Mr. Brownell was assaulted in the open street of Road Town (the capital) by a gentleman who considered himself and his friends maligned. The Missionary narrowly escaped grievous injury by retreating to a friendly house hard by. On the prosecution of the assailant the Tortola jury refused to convict him, so bitter was the general resentment caused by the Preacher's too true testimony. A counter-prosecution was even threatened. In the course of the year Brownell, whose health was enfeebled, returned to England.

The ill-will toward the Mission amongst the Tortola Whites<sup>1</sup> did not cease with Brownell's removal; six years later it took a singular expression.<sup>2</sup> A probationer of the name of Stewart arrived in August, 1814, who had been accepted for missionary service without due inquiry. Two months after reaching his station he was recalled, to meet some charge brought against him at home. His behaviour in Tortola had already alarmed his senior brethren, and attracted the favourable attention of the adversaries. The latter, amongst whom were wealthy leaders of Tortola society, on hearing of Stewart's situation, offered to make a handsome provision for him if he would stay and set up an independent Church in Road Town. Stewart accepted this flattering proposal, giving himself out as the victim of persecution. He was a plausible and dashing young fellow, possessed of limitless assurance, but without any depth of religious knowledge or conviction. His Tortola patrons—men notoriously indifferent to religion—laid hold of him as a

<sup>1</sup> Writing somewhat later, the Missionaries thus account for the above hostility: 'In consequence of the insurrection in Barbados the situation of the Missionaries is become very critical, as the planters have looked upon us with a jealous eye ever since they came to the knowledge of that Minute (1807) which prohibits Missionaries from possessing slaves. They view the principles of Methodism as a worm gnawing at the root of the principles of slavery, and which will accomplish its destruction at last.'

<sup>2</sup> During the next decade the anti-missionary animus considerably subsided. In 1823, when the planters were much alarmed about the growing Abolitionist movement at home, some of 'the gentlemen' are reported as making the just observation that, as 'we have neither soldiers nor militia in Tortola and the slaves know all that is going on in England, the tranquillity of the island is only to be attributed to religious instruction.'

tool to use against the Church which had brought him to the island. Thomas Morgan, the District Chairman, describes him as 'a man of fashion,' and writes: 'If the Conference sends out a few more men of the same stamp, the Mission will be ruined and some of us brought to an untimely grave.' The unusual course was taken of sending a strong remonstrance to the home Synod which had recommended the unworthy candidate. For a few months Stewart had a popular vogue in Road Town; but his emptiness and levity soon discredited him, and in August of the following year he was on his way back to England. The scandal and loss occasioned by the Stewart episode to the Tortola Circuit were distressing; from this, along with other causes, the Church membership shrank between 1813 and 1818 by more than a third. So the Tortola Mission had its crisis of depression during the second decade of the century, like those of Antigua and St Kitts. In this instance, as in those others, unfaithfulness in the ministry lent force to the tendencies making for disorder and division within the Church.

The ruling powers of Tortola were well disposed toward the Mission, and no overt persecution was allowed. Governor Mackintosh happened to pay a visit unexpectedly to one of the outlying Virgin Islands. He arrived on Saturday, at the hour when the Missionary was due upon his round; the latter had been detained by some unknown cause, and missed his appointment. The Missionary's quarters were in readiness; and as no other suitable lodging was available, the Governor and his suite were invited to occupy these rooms. On Sunday morning the Governor observed that the Methodist woman waiting upon him had something upon her mind, and asked her in the friendliest way what was the matter. 'Well den, 'scuse me, Massa,' the honest soul replied, 'but me tink if Massa Gubna use Minister's house and Minister's provisions, Massa Gubna ought to do Minister's work! We shan't hab no service to-day if you don't!' 'Very right, my good woman,' said His Excellency; 'bring me the books that are used in the chapel.' The Bible, hymn-book, and Wesley's Abridgement of the Common Prayers were produced; the chapel-bell was rung in due time, and the congregation assembled. The Governor, who was a truly Christian man, read the lessons and prayers devoutly, gave out the hymns, and delivered a suitable

address 'on a subject relating to the highest interests of man,' to the delight and edification of his hearers. At the earnest request of the people he took the pulpit again in the afternoon, officiating that day in the character of a Methodist Local Preacher. The act was in keeping with the kindly relations maintained by the Government toward that which was the only agency at work for the spiritual good of the Negroes in the British Virgin Islands.

Though continuing to hold the confidence of the bulk of the people, Tortolan Methodism has never been able to report again the numbers which swelled its Church roll at the close of the first ten years. A tide of emigration from these comparatively poor and barren islands began early in the century. In 1823, 1,000 slaves at once were transported to a new settlement formed in Trinidad, 400 of these being Methodist class-members. The exodus became more rapid after the Emancipation; the population of the group to-day is scarcely half what it was a century ago. The town of St. Thomas has grown at the expense of the outlying islands. The region has its full share in the West Indian calamities of hurricane and earthquake; in addition it suffers occasionally from prolonged drought—a visitation especially dreaded on the shallow soil of the Virgin Islands. Notwithstanding their poverty, the Tortolan Methodists were good givers; in prosperous times the Circuit more than paid its way.

During the twenties the Society, if not boasting the quantity of its earliest days, in quality and stability ranked more highly than before. A leading estate-manager of Tortola publicly certified that on the plantations which he controlled all the positions of trust open to slaves were held by members of the Methodist Society.

In the first appointment recorded by the *Minutes of Conference* (1790) two Missionaries are assigned to Tortola; in 1799 the staff was increased to three, at which figure it remained for nearly thirty years, until with the shrinkage of the population it was reduced to two. The more conspicuous Missionaries who laboured here have in most instances been commemorated in earlier paragraphs. Henry Evans removed to Tortola in 1805 from St. Kitts, where he had been signally useful. In the new Circuit he bore the brunt of the troubles connected with the attack upon Brownell,



and showed extraordinary evangelistic power; he 'regarded neither fatigue nor danger while engaged in the blessed work of saving souls. But his zeal and exertions were too great for the climate.' This was a case requiring the restraining hand of an experienced colleague; through prodigal expenditure of his strength the young Missionary's precious life was brought to a premature close.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Taylor, afterwards Secretary of the Society in London and President of the Conference, was the most distinguished among the early Tortola Missionaries. He laboured here for the last two of his seven years of Missionary service, and made himself 'peculiarly beloved and respected.' The case of Thomas Harrison is remarkable in that he was a *planter* turned Missionary. Born in England, this young man settled early in Antigua and acquired a landed property there. Converted to God through missionary agency, he renounced wealth for the Gospel's sake, and toiled with 'consistent piety and assiduity' for thirteen years (1821-34) amongst the Leeward Islands, the last three being devoted to the Tortola Mission. Harrison was made Chairman of the Antigua District in 1834; but at that juncture he was driven by ill-health to England. There he lived, an invalid Supernumerary, for fifteen years longer. James Cox and Edward Fraser 'travelled' here together in the early thirties—both men of distinction in the West Indian service, whom we shall have occasion to mention later.

The greatest Missionary, however, who served in Tortola before the Emancipation was William James Shrewsbury.\* During his long journeys on horseback or by boat, William Shrewsbury, like John Wesley, was an incessant student. In this fashion, while travelling the Tortola Circuit, he committed to memory the whole of the Hebrew Grammar. A self-made scholar and theologian, he attained to no mean rank in these accomplishments.<sup>3</sup> His subsequent stations were Grenada, and then Barbados, where we shall meet him later. In 1824

<sup>1</sup> John Taylor was associated with Henry Evans in Tortola, but he was compelled (in 1807) to go to Morrison's help in St. Kitts; then Evans was left alone with the burden of an immense Circuit upon him. The consequent overstrain was the primary cause of his death.

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<sup>3</sup> Shrewsbury's son relates that he had amongst his friends a Jewish Rabbi, with whom he would converse and correspond in Hebrew.

Shrewsbury returned to England. Two years later he commenced a new missionary career in South Africa, where his services to the Kaffirs were even more fruitful than those rendered to the Negroes of the western seas. After his final return to England (in 1836) he found strength for twenty-five years of unique service to the Churches at home<sup>1</sup> (1836-61). He died in 1866, having 'toiled and suffered for God,' as his tombstone testifies, 'during more than half a century.' No more fearless, faithful, indefatigable, holy, and humble man ever served in our missionary ranks, and few more able and effective.

The little island of NEVIS, adjoining St. Kitts, has an importance in Methodist annals out of proportion to its size. Dr. Coke's hospitable reception augured the prosperity of the Mission. From the beginning the colonists of Nevis had borne a good reputation. The slaves were treated humanely; the land was fruitful and well tilled, and at the close of the eighteenth century the island was thickly peopled. Hammet visited Nevis from St. Kitts and founded the Society; his labours were followed by those of Owens, who resided on the island; in 1793 a Church of 400 members was in existence. Beside the Nesbit cousins, other planters and estate-managers actively favoured the Mission. The word of the Lord had free course in Nevis. For a while this island was annexed to the St. Kitts Circuit, from which it was parted by 'the Narrows,' three miles in width; later it was commonly worked as a separate field, and from 1802-30 employed regularly on its tiny area of twenty square miles two Missionaries, for whom in the main the Nevis Methodists provided out of their own resources.

Trouble, however, arose before the end of the century. In 1796-98 the uncompromising John Brownell was on the staff of St. Kitts and Nevis. At this date there were only two or three chapels in the island; on a number of estates the proprietor's or manager's house provided a preaching-room. It came to Brownell's knowledge that several of the gentlemen who thus patronized the Mission led immoral lives, and he observed that the slaves attended worship reluctantly under such auspices. He declined to hold Divine service in houses known to be disgraced by vice, preferring the meanest negro

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cabin with a clean family life to 'the tents of wickedness.' The protest had the hearty approval of the black people,<sup>1</sup> and commended itself to worthier white public opinion; but it was fiercely resented by a section of the slave-holders, who, in consequence of Brownell's action, disturbed and sometimes broke up the public services, mobbed the Preachers, and attempted to burn down the Charlestown Chapel. They threatened to drive the Methodists out of the island. Some coloured members of Society actually fled for the safety of their lives. Mr. Brownell was waylaid and dangerously assaulted. At last he appealed to the Government, and obtained police protection. Proceedings were taken against the rioters, who were bound over to keep the peace.

Brownell writes to the Missionary Committee:

During this time of persecution it is remarkable that the Society flourished amazingly. Numbers flocked to hear us, and, I trust, gave themselves to Christ, insomuch that we were obliged to enlarge our place of worship at Charlestown. We have admitted about 100 new members since this time last year.

In 1805 the island was disturbed, and much property destroyed, by a temporary landing of the French. Methodism still advanced rapidly, and reached its maximum in point of numbers in 1806, when the Nevis Circuit reported 1,448 Church members. The opening of a large new chapel in 1802 was made the occasion of a friendly demonstration in which all classes of the people were united. The Sabbath had now become generally respected throughout the island. In 1803 a Missionary writes: 'Not only black and coloured people, but Whites also' attend worship, 'a kind of miracle here.' The class-meetings were regarded askance by many planters, who approved of public worship amongst their negro folk, but thought these hole-and-corner musterings likely to be used for propagating revolutionary ideas and concocting mischief. Some of them forbade their slaves meeting in class. The Missionaries were suspected of being in league with Wilberforce and the anti-slavery movement in England.

The reaction marked during the second decade of the century in the three Missions of this District previously reviewed

<sup>1</sup> Even where no reproach of this kind existed, it was found that the slaves were shy of coming to worship in their master's fine houses, and preferred their own rude sanctuaries.

commenced in Nevis a little earlier. Having once commenced, it continued steadily until the end of the period, so that in 1833 the Societies numbered no more than 825 Church members—about the figure registered at the close of the previous century, and not much above half of that reached in 1806. There were the usual troubles over cases of moral failure amongst the Negroes; discipline gradually became more methodical and strict. In 1818 the two Missionaries report the state of religion low, and attribute this to the fact that there had been but one Preacher on the island the year before and ‘that the Methodist discipline had been in some points neglected and in others but too lax.’ No great scandal or general relapse took place to account for the decrease. In 1816 there was a recrudescence of persecution, as in some other islands, due to the popularity of Marryat’s pamphlet against the Missions, the mischievous publication to which Richard Watson replied a year later. John Mortier was the Missionary in charge at this time. An attempt was made to stop his work by ‘pressing’ him for the Militia.

The question of slave marriage embarrassed the West Indian Mission for half a century and more. The laws of the colonies in most instances gave no recognition to married union between slaves, while the law of the Church is peremptory. In 1807 the Missionary Committee replied to an inquiry from Nevis for instructions on the subject in these terms: ‘When the slaves are not allowed to marry according to law, a solemn agreement before witnesses must be deemed sufficient’ to admit of their being reckoned members of Society if otherwise qualified. Ten years later the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, pronounced that slaves had the right to legally protected marriage—an opinion ignored by the local authorities. In 1828 an Act was passed to regularize marriage of slaves solemnized by Ministers of the Established Churches of England and Scotland; but this provision touched only a fraction of the Christian slaves of the island. Not until after Emancipation were negro marriages put upon a proper legal footing. The slave-holders more or less openly treated all regulations from outside on this matter as an interference with the rights of property concerned in the breeding of their chattels. The absence of marriage-sanctions and of protection for female chastity made terribly against a settled Christian order amongst the Negroes.

The distress caused by unfavourable seasons militated against the Church at this period. Missionaries report in 1814-15 'diminution owing to hard times; when from poverty Negroes cannot contribute, they refuse to remain in Society.' At such times also they were compelled to work their own patches of land on Sunday, which rendered them liable to expulsion from the Church. Behind the difficulties of morals and of economics was the continued decline in population. New territory with rich virgin soil was offered to British colonists in Trinidad and Demerara; and removals from the smaller congested islands to these countries on the part of the planters and their workpeople were frequent during the twenties and onwards. By the middle of the century the inhabitants of Nevis had dwindled to less than half the number of fifty years earlier.

The Anglican and Methodist Churches had this little island to themselves, and generally maintained amicable relations. Methodism continued to be the Church of the multitude; the black people did not forget that it had brought to their fathers the light of the Gospel. The first Anglican clergyman came in 1806, appointed by the Bishop of London 'to instruct, baptize, and bury the slaves without fee.' This Missionary contested the right of the Wesleyan Preachers to administer the Sacraments; but the dispute did not last long, and the clergy of the five parishes subsequently formed were commonly men of a liberal evangelical spirit. One of these, Beacock by name, a native of Barbados, exercised a long and gracious ministry in the island; his memory, with that of his wife, was fragrant there for half a century.

As Emancipation approached (1831-33) the slaves were agitated by the report, which spread widely through the West Indies and caused a disastrous revolt in Jamaica, that the King in England had already granted liberty, which the Whites of the colonies were in conspiracy to hold back. No rising, however, took place in this part of the archipelago; the mistaken belief caused some temporary alienation from the Missionaries, and the Negroes were too excited to attend much to the business of their souls. Happily the crisis was short.

The young Missionary, Henry B. Britten, writing from Nevis a little earlier, and summing up the progress of the Mission

there, states what was widely true of the West Indian Circuits :

I have often worked in this District with a heavy heart. . . . It is lamentable that . . . there are so few intelligent or efficient subordinate agents. Nothing is devised or carried into effect without the Missionary. . . . Slavery has been the cause of this helplessness. He sees but one remedy. Furnish us with Missionaries and school-masters in adequate numbers and I have no doubt we shall have as efficient Stewards, Local Preachers, and the rest, as English Societies furnish. Our Mission also will be very much less dependent than it is now.

This anticipation, alas, was not fulfilled in after years, mainly because of the insufficient means of education supplied for the herd of emancipated slaves. Britten sees ground for hope in the eagerness of the slaves to fit themselves for their expected privilege as free men for instruction. At this date (1829) the Nevis Circuit had 1,000 members, 25 preaching-places, one Minister, and no Local Preacher.

Dr. Coke left in ST. EUSTATIUS in 1793 a Methodist Society of 220 members. This Church was under the care of the St. Kitts Superintendent ; but the persecution carried on by Governor Rennels until his death prevented pastoral visitation. In the *Minutes* of 1794 the St. Eustatius Society is entered as numbering 40. After this it disappears for seventeen years.

The fire of the new life that had been kindled in so many hearts was not extinguished ; numbers of the Negroes, both free and in bondage, held fast their faith, and in secret 'spake often one to another' concerning the things of God. From time to time messages passed across the nine miles of sea separating the two islands ; the suppressed Methodism of St. Eustatius bided its time. The better day came when in 1811 the old Dutch Governor died. About the same time the island passed temporarily under the rule of Great Britain ; twice it changed hands during the French war, being finally restored to Holland by the Treaty of Vienna in 1815.

Myles Coupland Dixon was the Missionary sent to St. Eustatius in 1811, on the appeal of the long unshepherded people. In that year he enrolled 246 people in Church membership ; a Society more hearty, sincere, and affectionate could hardly be found. The Dutch colonists and officials were coming to an altered mind about Methodism ; in a little while their sympathy and approval showed itself as decided as their



prejudice had been severe and obstinate.<sup>1</sup> Upon re-establishment Methodism soon became the Church of the whole community. The Government of Holland took little care of religion in its West Indian colonies, and the white inhabitants—all conversant with English—were glad to accept, along with the black folk, the offices of the Methodist Ministers. Myles Dixon was an intelligent and large-minded man, and a thoroughly competent Missionary, whom his people always wished to retain longer than Synod and Conference permitted. In person he was little and slender, but knew how to hold his own ; when the Dutch Council in the first instance forbade his preaching, and on his persistence summoned him for disobedience, he demanded reasons for the act of intolerance. The reply made was to the effect (1) that good slaves were rendered mad by Methodist preaching—an echo of the old reproach of twenty years ago, and (2) that their attending service at five o'clock in the morning unfitted them for the day's work. Dixon challenged the accusers to produce a single case of a slave of sound mind demented by hearing the Gospel ; they were confounded. Dixon 'travelled' nine years in the West Indies, dividing his labours between the Leeward and Windward Isles. His subsequent course in the home ministry was prolonged ; he died in 1857.

Dixon's labours were followed, at some interval, by those of Jonathan Raynar, Missionary in St. Eustatius from 1815-18, who won the esteem of British, Dutch, and Negroes alike. In 1816 the island was constituted a Circuit when its Church membership was 320, six of these being Whites. Jonathan Raynar had been for a while the Methodist schoolmaster at Sierra Leone. Returning to England from this employment, he was sent as Missionary to the West Indies, where he died in 1819, in his sixth year of service. From St. Eustatius, where he and his wife won golden opinions, he was sent to open the Mission in Tobago. Here he lost his wife ; removing to another station, he himself passed away ten months later.

From St. Eustatius Raynar wrote :

Notwithstanding the fact that there is no island where in our first attempt we met with greater opposition, now there is no island where the utility of the Mission is so generally acknowledged and the

<sup>1</sup> It was significant that the daughter of Governor Rennels became a devoted Methodist. For many years this lady was a most useful Class-leader in St. Eustatius.

Missionary so greatly respected by all ranks, from His Excellency the Governor down to the field Negro. . . . Our yearly collection from the white people alone amounted to more than £40 last year, although their circumstances, from the low state of trade, have been truly distressing. Their kindness and attention to myself during the three years I laboured there will never be erased from my mind.

He complains of the cramped and pewless condition of the chapel as preventing the attendance of white families, whose accession would greatly benefit the Church. At that date there were still but 8 white members, in a Society of 282. On this small area of seven square miles, with a dwindling population, there was no room for expansion ; the Society remained about the same strength until the year 1827, when a revival took place and the chapel was enlarged. In 1830 the membership reached its maximum strength, numbering 450, of whom 39 were Whites, 120 free Blacks or coloured people, and the rest slaves—a mixture corresponding to that of the population. Three years later the white Church members numbered 125, a proportion of the resident Europeans unapproached by our Church elsewhere in the West Indies.

Like other of the smaller islands, St. Eustatius declined in wealth and population as the century advanced. During the time of conflict between Great Britain and France, so long as Holland kept clear of the war, this island had an extraordinary prosperity. It was cultivated to its utmost possibility ; being a free port and strongly fortified, the town of St. Eustatius became a great emporium, despite the fact that the rocky, unbroken coast and the violence of the surf allowed of no harbour nor even of a wharf for landing goods. When, after the peace, other ports became available, St. Eustatius lost its value for West Indian trade, and reverted to its natural character as an isolated agricultural settlement. The population—at one period twentyfold this number—is now less than 1,500 ; of these more than a tenth are in the Methodist Church. The slaves of the Dutch colonies were not emancipated until 1863.

ST. SABA, which, though smaller in size, is now better peopled than its neighbour, became an outlier of the St. Eustatius Circuit, and till the middle of the century depended on the Missionary there for all religious ministrations. Its plain unsophisticated people made excellent Methodists.

DOMINICA is the southernmost and largest of the British

Leeward Isles, containing 305 square miles of surface out of the 715 making up their total area ; in population, however, this island of rich soil and magnificent scenery is exceeded by Antigua and St. Kitts. Dr. Coke founded the Mission here, with fair prospect of success. Two adverse conditions, however, have limited and interrupted its progress : the predominance of Romanism, long established in Dominica when Methodism began its work, and holding the allegiance of four-fifths of the population ; and the unhealthiness of the climate, which has proved more fatal to the lives of Missionaries than that of any other West Indian station, ranking with the West Coast of Africa in its death-dealing character. Amongst other drawbacks incident to Dominica through its unwholesome air is the absence of most of the British landowners, who left their estates to the oversight of attorneys and managers ; on the other hand, the French colonial families, almost uniformly Roman Catholics, generally live on the soil and acclimatize themselves. The coloured people here are relatively numerous ; as a body, they are of higher status and culture, and count for more in public affairs than in other islands.

After McCornock's sad death the station remained vacant for six years, during which time the Society was kept in being by the little company gathered round Mrs. Webley. John Cook was sent out to resume the work, but fell a victim to yellow fever before reaching his appointed post. A Society of twenty then existed on the island. The little Church struggled on, and two years later a successor was found for Cook. The enmity of the planters was now aroused ; they forbade the slaves attending evening preaching. As this veto failed to stop the work, they adopted the device of summoning the Minister to join the militia for Sunday drill. On his appeal against the order he was banished. His brief labours had borne fruit, for in 1797 the Dominica Society figures at the number of 50.

A new beginning was made in Dominica by Thomas Dumbleton in 1798. This modest and serviceable man, who had had three years' experience in St. Kitts, where he was especially beloved, managed to hold his ground against malaria and persecution ; the Governor protected him from the molestation of the planters, and the Mission at last gained a recognized footing in the colony. By the time Dumbleton left the Society

had grown to 109 members. Joseph Bocock was the next Missionary on the ground. He lived long enough to dispel the lingering prejudice against Methodism ; so much admiration did he win in Roseau, the chief town, that a public subscription was raised to honour his burial. Robert Shepley<sup>1</sup> was stationed here in 1801 ; when his term in the island closed, in 1804, he reported 1,003 Church members—an accession in part the fruit of his predecessor's influence. To further Shepley's progress, a helper was sent in the person of Thomas Richardson, an enthusiastic young Yorkshireman. He, alas, was stricken down in October, 1803, after eight months' happy toil on the island, leaving his colleague to bear, with broken strength, the burden entailed by his great success. Repeated attacks of fever at length prostrated Mr. and Mrs. Shepley. The Missionary Committee ordered him to Nova Scotia ; he sailed to England, pleading the counter orders of his doctors. Dr. Coke wrote in apology to the Committee, which regarded Shepley's act as a breach of discipline :

Brother S. has done more in the way of martyrdom than perhaps any other man in the Connexion would have done. . . . He endured yellow fever four times, and his wife twice. When he was on the point of dying, his physicians urged him to set off with the fleet to his native country. He went off, instead of going to Nova Scotia. Very probably you would have done the same. We have no right to punish him.

Coke asks that he may now receive an appointment in Nova Scotia with a view to his return later to the West Indies. How the result came about there is nothing to show ; but Shepley did not go to Nova Scotia, and his name disappears from the Stations of 1805 without explanation. A valuable Missionary was lost by his withdrawal.

A couple of new Missionaries were required for Dominica. The younger man was posted at Prince Rupert's Bay, on the north-west of the island, the second town in importance, where by this time a large Society was gathered, and a congregation of 1,000 souls. Unhappily, the air of this beautiful spot was poisoned by the neighbouring swamp, as John Hawkshaw, the Preacher stationed here, fatally proved. In his fifth year of missionary work, following on two years' probation at home,

<sup>1</sup> The name is ' Shipley ' in the *Minutes* ; in his own letters, R. S. spells it with two e's.



Hawkshaw was sent to break ground for the Mission in Demerara, but was deported by the hostile Governor of that colony. Thus left unemployed, he came to give assistance in Dominica ; in little more than a month he succumbed to the local pestilence. He was recognized as a man of devoted zeal and of exceptional promise.

After some years spent on other islands, Thomas Dumbleton returned in 1805 as Superintendent to Dominica, where he was much esteemed. His former incumbency had left an entail which, though the fault of others, went far to undo the good work he had accomplished here. The case affords a sad example of the chronic troubles arising in this field from the exigencies of chapel-building and the ineffective financial control exercised over the scattered Missions. At Roseau a chapel was imperatively needed when Dumbleton came. A Methodist lady of the place advanced money to build a suitable structure on land of her own, for which, however, she required rent ; in course of time a Preacher's house was erected to complete the premises. Before he left Dominica, Mr. Dumbleton married this lady. He was in course of clearing the whole debt, and had secured substantial promises toward this end, when his plans were disconcerted by removal (in 1800) to Grenada. The Dominica people pleaded with Dr. Coke against this disturbance, but in vain, many of the promised subscriptions were withheld, and the scheme for abolishing the debt fell through. The Roseau Society failed to pay the interest due to Mrs. Dumbleton ; who for a time took the situation patiently. With the return of the family to Roseau in 1805, it was hoped that things would right themselves. But the French invasion early in that year impoverished the town ; and the hurricane of the following September was scarcely less disastrous. The exposure Dumbleton suffered under the latter visitation brought on a fever which terminated his life before the year's end, and he filled another missionary grave in Dominica.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Dumbleton, who had several children, pressed her claim on the Roseau property—beside the current interest heavy arrears were owing. Failing satisfaction, she insisted on occupation of the premises, though another house was offered her ; and when she could not turn out the Minister, she forced an entrance into the chapel and

made it her dwelling-house. The humiliating struggle went on until, in May, 1813, a hurricane blew down both chapel and house, and the land was abandoned to its owner. Mrs. Dumbleton claimed even the timber of the wrecked buildings in settlement of the accumulated arrears. The deceased Missionary was not blamed for his part in these transactions ; only he had been too eager to help the Church out of the means at his disposal. The Missionaries who followed Dumbleton—such men as Thomas Pattison and William Gilgrass<sup>1</sup>—strove in vain to surmount the discredit Methodism had suffered at Roseau. When in 1810 the whole Church in the island had been reduced to 90, George Johnston, with characteristic self-sacrifice, volunteered for this dangerous and almost hopeless station, even proposing to live at the deadly Prince Rupert's Bay. He reports that almost everything had to be begun over again ; the Society at Prince Rupert was dissolved for lack of oversight. In this forlorn hope Johnston succeeded through his indomitable energy and strength of faith. The scattered flocks rallied about him ; many conversions attended his preaching. By the end of the first year the Church of 90 members had grown to 600 ; this number swelled to 755 in the year 1812, under the able preaching and careful shepherding of his successor, John Willis.

Willis contracted the Prince Rupert fever, but escaped to England with his life, leaving the island at the end of 1813. So the malignancy of the climate wrought again to hinder the work of God. It must be remembered that the dominant Romanism was all the while combating Methodism, aggravating every weakness and turning adverse circumstances to full account against it. During the time of Johnston and Willis the Mission was on the point of bankruptcy ; the people were too few and too poor to pay the Ministers' stipends. A second man had been sent to aid the recovery of the Circuit under Johnston's leadership ; and, his Chairman refusing to interpose, he was compelled to take the extraordinary step of drawing on the Mission House for his personal support, promising repayment by instalments. Somehow this difficulty was surmounted and the situation was saved.

The second Missionary being withdrawn, and Willis's

<sup>1</sup> Gilgrass describes the Mission in Dominica in 1810 as ' an old wreck, against which the waves are perpetually dashing.'

breakdown leaving the Circuit without a pastor, another collapse was imminent in 1814. For the time Prince Rupert's Bay hardly counted; and the Roseau Society was so discouraged that it contemplated winding up its affairs! The Church was kept in being by the sole efforts of half a dozen faithful coloured women—some of them slaves, half of them unable to write, who acted as Leaders and Exhorters. They conducted daily prayer-meetings, which were well attended, and held three Class-meetings during the week. But their ministrations naturally did not appeal to 'the genteeler sort'; not a single white man remained in the Society. In this sad extremity hope was revived by the conversion of a planter named Thomas Dakin—a lapsed Methodist of old days—some members of whose family were acquainted with Dr. Adam Clarke in England. This gentleman united heartily with the derelict flock, and took up its cause with energy and business aptitude. He addressed, through Dr. Clarke, a letter to the Missionary Committee which fully revealed the state of the case, showing that material and means existed for building up the Circuit once more, provided that an efficient ministry could be maintained. Dakin's letter was countersigned by the six women Leaders, three of them making their 'mark.' At the same time a petition came from Dominica to the Antigua Synod 'sufficient,' as Myles Dixon, the Secretary, reports, 'to have pierced a heart of stone!'

Jeremiah Boothby, a probationer in his fourth year and a young man of enthusiastic zeal and high-strung temperament, was the man appointed; he did not arrive till February, 1816, when Dominica had been without a pastor for over two years. He and his wife—a woman scarcely less useful than her husband—were well received, and soon made themselves beloved and popular. Boothby's preaching, it was said, was 'like fire among dry stubble'; men 'of all persuasions and stations were brought to hear and feel the power of the word.' There was something in the nature of the Dominica people like a Highland stream, which comes down 'in spate' when the mood is upon it; within three months of Boothby's landing a great revival was in progress. Generous plans were launched, under the leadership of Dakin, for enlargement of the chapel at Roseau, and for securing permanent possession,

which was endangered at the time.<sup>1</sup> The Missionary Committee gave encouragement, and everything appeared to promise success, when in July death once more launched his bolt, and the Missionary, on whose personal influence and favour with the people so much depended, died five months after his coming.

Mr. Dakin proved himself a staunch friend in the new emergency; his manful exhortations and his care of the Society's temporal affairs prevented the worst effects of the bereavement. William Beacock, who had been less than two years in the islands, was sent to fill Boothby's place—a young man of whom a brother Missionary said: 'His charity, diligence, zeal, humility, resignation, I scarcely ever saw equalled.' Beacock's story is almost a repetition of that of his predecessor; on August 29, 1817, he died, succumbing to fever following upon a chill. In the five months of his labours he recommenced the work at Prince Rupert, where new premises had been provided by a valuable local gift to the Society; in concert with Mr. Dakin he was arranging for reopening the preaching-places in the villages<sup>2</sup> when death overtook him. He had actually received 71 new members into the Church. On the other hand, the burden resting on the Roseau premises was crushing, and the Home Committee rigidly refused aid toward local plant. Beacock had started a fresh attempt to grapple with the debt. The Governor of the island headed a subscription list, which promised well, despite the financial straits of the island. It seemed as though 'the Gates of Hades' were destined to prevail over the Methodist Church in Dominica. Eight Missionaries had fallen in succession in the attempt to win this field for Christ—some of them young men of the highest promise; two others had been driven off with shattered health. That the Mission persevered, and on the ground where it could but hope to gain a few hundred negro souls for Christ, was proof of Methodist heroism and of British tenacity.

Beacock's death frustrated all immediate hope of freeing

<sup>1</sup> The Dumbleton property had been surrendered long before this date, but the new chapel stood in ground which the enemies of Methodism were trying to get hold of.

<sup>2</sup> Through lack of oversight Methodism in the outlying part of the island had sunk into sad disorder, and Beacock had distressing duties of discipline to discharge. His difficulties in administration were much aggravated by the circumstance that he was a bachelor, and few but women were available in the Circuit for stewardships or leadership.



the Roseau property by local effort ; it was in pressing danger from the mortgagees. Woolley, the Chairman of the District, took up the case,<sup>1</sup> and bore the brunt of its maintenance before the Home Committee. He declares (writing in April, 1818) that he had disapproved of the original purchase (made by Boothby and Dakin), and had some time ago suggested measures by which rash steps of the kind, taken by inexperienced men, might be precluded. The thing was done, however ; and the Committee had condoned the offence by meeting drafts made upon it for the first and second payments. He cannot at this stage contemplate drawing back, when upwards of £2,000 of the Committee's money had been sunk in the property, and forfeiting the whole—this would be sheer bankruptcy ! He has drawn on the Society for the payment now due, in face of the warning that the bill would be protested ; he will have to do so once again. If his signature be disavowed, then he goes to prison, and the Mission House must reconcile this with its honour in the best way it can ! One hears nothing more of the affair, and can only suppose that the Chairman was supported and the foreclosure averted.

The judicious William White, then James Catts, and after him Thomas Morgan, the commanding Chairman of the District, superintended for the next seven years the Dominica Circuit, which was reduced to a stable membership of about 450. It was manned by two, and for a while three, Missionaries ; the danger had been proved of leaving this post under the charge of a single Minister. In 1824 John Felvus—the newly appointed third Minister, who was set down on the east side of the island (his seniors lived at Roseau and Prince Rupert)—reports the slaves in that quarter as the most ignorant and superstitious in the West Indies. Beside the Methodist Preachers, there were at that time but two Anglican clergymen and two Roman Catholic priests living on Dominica—all resident in Roseau ; the Anglican worshippers were but a handful. The staff was reduced again to two when Felvus removed in 1825 to St. Bartholomew. Next year he returned as Superintendent to Dominica, with John Burton for junior colleague. The Church membership was now 462.

Burton began his long course of ministry (1825-97) in

<sup>1</sup> This excellent man had before this fallen under the Committee's displeasure in the somewhat similar Antigua chapel-case.

Dominica. He ministered for six years in this District, then came home with broken health, which was repaired in every other respect except that of his voice. This remained so feeble and precarious that in the case of almost any other man public work would have been impossible. Through his extraordinary genius for the pulpit John Burton conquered this disability, and came to be known as one of the most commanding and admirable Preachers of the Methodist Church. A single letter of his, written from Prince Rupert's Bay, has been preserved which vividly depicts the operation of the Gospel upon West Indian heathenism :

Compared with what this part of Dominica was previous to the commencement of our labours thirty or forty years back, it has undergone a striking alteration. The mind hangs suspended between astonishment and gratitude while attempting to estimate merely the moral effects which have been manifested. The moral wilderness has begun to blossom as the rose. Many who were then in the most perfect sense without God and without hope in the world are now rejoicing in His saving knowledge. Many (not to say all) their former corrupt and sensualizing practices have been abandoned. The liar has ceased to lie as before, and now speaks the truth to his neighbours. The swearer has stilled his cursing tongue, and through grace Divine his blasphemies are turned to praise. The adulterer has ceased to frequent the filthy haunts of his midnight crime, and has been brought to 'possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.' Obeahism, by which many were in bondage to the most frightful and ghastly apprehensions, has been subverted by truth ; its hold on the imagination, and its deadly influence on the conduct, have been destroyed, its very existence as a demon-charm annihilated, and in many instances its name is now only accompanied with disgust and hate.<sup>1</sup> This, blessed be God, is a triumph over the powers of darkness, well adapted to cheer our minds under the discouragements with which we meet in other parts of the island.

Notwithstanding the melancholy interruptions and almost insuperable difficulties meeting the messengers of the Gospel on this field, they had gained a signal victory over the kingdom of darkness.

The best missionary talent the District could command—including James Cox, Abraham Whitehouse, and James Walton, who followed John Felvus in the superintendency—was expended on Dominica during the later twenties and early thirties. Steadily the membership rose, until in 1833 it was close upon 1,000, reaching the level attained at the

<sup>1</sup> This passage shows that the superstitions rampant amongst the converted Negroes of Jamaica prevailed similarly on other islands.

beginning of the century, but with a far sounder constituency behind the figure reported. In view of the day of liberty close at hand the Missionary writes :

The slaves are anxious for their freedom, but it is an anxiety tempered with prudence. . . . I believe there is not a Negro who has not a thorough acquaintance with the progress of the Bill in all its stages . . . and they seem unitedly determined to wait patiently, and submit to any measures adopted by the home Government.

There were wise and kindly Romanist priests, whose influence with the slaves was wholesome ; but we may fairly attribute the general good sense and self-control this letter indicates to the leaven of Methodism pervading the island. It was observed that even Romanist Negroes had adopted the practice of the Methodist prayer-meeting. So far as we have observed, not a single Wesleyan Missionary died in Dominica during the sixteen years preceding 1833—an immunity due, probably, to the better situations now chosen for the Mission-houses.

The first Missionary to ST. BARTHOLOMEW (Barts) was William Turton, who landed here in 1796 when driven out of Tobago. Finding a people, most of whom spoke English (French was used besides in the interior), destitute of religious ordinances, and craving for them, he could not but remain. The feeble health in which he arrived was restored by the wholesome climate and kind hospitality of the little island. He was granted the use of the empty church, and became the Minister of the island, finding favour with all classes of the simple folk. In 1798, when he was definitely stationed at St. Bartholomew by the Conference, a Society of 70 Church members was reported. By this time a chapel had been built (the church could only be used by daylight), all classes of the population, from the Swedish Governor downwards, assisting in its erection. Conspicuous among Turton's helpers was an English resident named David Nisbet.

Next year, when the membership had mounted to 120, Turton was sent by Dr. Coke to open the Mission in the Bahamas. His place was filled by a Missionary allowed to remain seven years<sup>1</sup> in this isolated spot who fell into irregular ways. So soon as District administration was established

<sup>1</sup> Turton had been on the footing of a lay agent.

and his affairs were looked into, dismissal followed.<sup>1</sup> Later, in 1806, St. Barts—a naturally poor as well as diminutive island—suffered severely from famine. Joseph Taylor, who succeeded this man in 1807, restored the character of the Mission ; but he was required elsewhere in a year's time, and the Circuit depended on occasional visits from the nearest Missionaries<sup>2</sup> until 1812, when the excellent Myles Dixon was posted here. The Church held together through the years of privation, and even grew to a membership of 200 ; Methodism had struck in St. Barts a patch of good soil.

By 1814 the St. Barts membership, swelled by recent conversions, had grown to 54—a large number out of so small a community. The quiet, methodical Daniel Hillier 'travelled' the island for three years. After him came John Dace, whose diligent and blameless course was terminated here by death in September, 1821. Gifted with modest talent, Dace was most conscientious and diligent ; he shrank from opposition, but in St. Barts, amongst an unsophisticated and kindly disposed folk, his ministry was peculiarly valued and successful ; a great concourse of people, headed by the Governor of the colony, attended his body to the grave. He had given fifteen years of labour to the islands, interrupted by a single furlough.

A few days after Dace's death a hurricane swept over the island, which levelled the chapel and manse to the ground and plunged the colony in distress. Quickly a new and better chapel was reared through the zeal and liberal gifts of the people. A period of impoverishment and commercial depression, however, now set in, such as overtook the smaller Antilles generally about this time.

In the course of one year [Moister relates] no fewer than 100 Church members were among those obliged to leave the colony and seek a livelihood elsewhere ; it became no unusual thing for St. Barts owners in financial difficulties to sell their slaves to purchasers from more thriving colonies.

Thus straitened, the little Church declined in numbers from the maximum reached in 1814 ; during the twenties it ranged

<sup>1</sup> During this period, in 1801, the island was occupied for a while by a British force, who made the Methodist chapel their barracks and used the fabric badly. It was long before any compensation was obtained.

<sup>2</sup> 'One to be sent as soon as possible' (or 'convenient') was the formula attached to St. Bartholomew in the Stations year after year.



down to 270 or thereabouts. The reports of the character and spirit of the Societies are almost invariably approving. There was no opposition, but little room for expansion ; the work the Circuit afforded was hardly enough to occupy a Minister in full activity. The air was salubrious, however ; the people were agreeable ; and the lighter duties made this port suitable to men overwrought by the strain of labour on toilsome, contentious, or unhealthy stations.

John Burton ministered on St. Barts from 1829 to 1831. He was followed by Jonathan Cadman (1831-33). Emancipation in the Swedish St. Bartholomew, as in the French, Danish, and Dutch colonies, followed the British Emancipation at a considerable interval of time.

ANGUILLA affords an instance, almost singular in the West Indies, of the Gospel spreading self-sown without missionary propagation. John Hodge, a free coloured Anguillan Native, had been brought under Wesleyan ministration on some other island to a knowledge of saving truth. He returned home in 1813, full of love of Christ and compassion for his fellow countrymen. Numbering about 3,000, they had had no pastor or teacher of any kind for the last twenty years.<sup>1</sup> Of his own accord Hodge began to 'speak to them the words of life.' The Spirit of God was with him, hundreds of hearers gathered round him, and many were brought to conviction of the truth. The Missionary Riley heard from the neighbouring island of St. Barts of this blessed work of God ; coming over in 1815, he found a Society of 250 members formed by Hodge, who, while carrying on his secular occupation, acted as their pastor and preached regularly on the Sundays. On Riley's report, the Antigua Synod recognized Hodge as lay agent for Anguilla. For some years he laboured in this status, while the Church was supervised by occasional visits from neighbouring islands. In the year 1818 Anguilla first appears on the official Stations, with 169 Church members credited to it and the promise of a Minister 'to be sent.'

Before this recognition tidings of the evangelization of Anguilla had come from another quarter. Butterworth and Thompson, the two Methodist Members of Parliament, early in 1817 issued a Circular of Inquiry addressed to a number of

<sup>1</sup> The French landing in 1795 devastated the island and burnt the existing churches, which had never been restored.

leading and responsible persons in the West Indies, seeking information as to the social and moral condition of the islands and the work of the Missionaries.<sup>1</sup> The Deputy-Governor of Anguilla, in response to the above inquiry, wrote thus :

The unexpected introduction of religion took place in the year 1813, in which year I received a letter from John Hodge, a free coloured man and native of this island, importuning my sanction for the establishing of it. Deeming it essential to the reformation of the slaves, who, before that period, were conducting themselves in habitual violation of the whole system of morality, and with a view to discipline them in their duty to God and man, I readily offered every encouragement to the petitioner, who proceeded to discharge his religious duties as a Local Preacher<sup>2</sup> without the most trifling procrastination, until Class-meetings were established and leaders were appointed to investigate them ; which duties he still continues to discharge.

Methodism originated in Anguilla exactly as it did in North America, and on many a colonial settlement, by the self-propagating power of the spirituality of laymen. In the same year Whitworth, after a visit to Anguilla from St. Barts, reports the testimony of a resident proprietor formerly prejudiced against Methodism, who admits that since its coming ' there has been an almost entire cessation of dancing, wakes, and carousing amongst the Negroes,' in consequence of which ' they enjoy good health and have scarcely any need for doctors ! ' Grateful for this benefit, the gentleman subscribes £10, and the labour of his own Negroes, toward the chapel proposed to be built.

The Committee in London were so struck by the reports of Hodge's enterprise and capacity that they wished to engage him as a Missionary for West Africa. Whitworth, it appears, had had the same thought about this extraordinary young man, but feared to remove him from the place where he was so useful ; and Hodge had formed ties which bound him to Anguilla. In 1818 he laid aside secular work and became recognized officially as Minister of religion for the island, being approved equally by Whites and Blacks, and the Legislature

<sup>1</sup> This circular was called forth by the pamphlet of Mr. Marryat, M.P., published in 1816, which did so much mischief both at home and in the West Indies by its unscrupulous and inflammatory attack on the Missionary Societies. Richard Watson, in his masterly defence, made effective use of the data collected by Messrs. Butterworth and Thompson.

<sup>2</sup> John Hodge had, presumably, been appointed to this office before returning to Anguilla.

contributing to his maintenance. He laboured on in the same capacity until the year 1822, when he was ordained, and his name first appears on the Stations. At this date the Anguilla Church membership had reached 220.

Gilgrass and Dace had examined John Hodge with a view to his appointment to Africa; the former reported to the Home Committee in his emphatic style :

Hodge ranks as high as any coloured man in all the West Indies. He is company for the Governor and Legislature. His person is comely, his manners graceful; his language rather neat than bombastical; his soul burns with holy fervour, and his will is greatly subdued and acting with that of God—in short he is qualified for the work proposed in every particular.

This paragon of excellence—a prophet honoured in his own country—fell short perhaps of the expectations formed about him. His great natural gifts did not wholly surmount the defects of his education, and failed to develop with the advance of life. Efficient in the essential work of saving souls, he never acquired aptitude for ‘grappling with temporalities.’ Continuing as Minister of Anguilla till 1827, Hodge served there a second term from 1832 to 1835, and retired from active ministry in 1840 to spend a long supernumeraryship on the island of St. Martin.

Henry B. Britten ‘travelled’ in Anguilla from 1827 to 1829, Jonathan Cadman in the following year, and Matthew Banks from 1830–32. In these five years the little Circuit prospered wonderfully, the Church membership in 1831 reaching 617—a figure almost unparalleled for so small a population. Having a soil adapted for cattle-rearing rather than tilling, Anguilla is but thinly occupied; apart from cattle, an extensive salt-pond affords its main source of wealth. As in the case of St. Barts, the younger folk drifted elsewhere to seek a better livelihood. A steady shrinkage of population went on, which was accelerated by the enfranchisement of the slaves. Methodism remained the Church of the island.

The zeal of John Hodge could not be confined to the narrow bounds of his native isle. ST. MARTIN lies between Anguilla and St. Bartholomew. The intemperance and vice of its people were notorious; beyond the occasional visit of a Romanist priest to the French part of the country no religious ministry existed there. Accompanied by a few Methodist

friends, Hodge visited the French capital in 1817 and held a crowded and successful meeting there. The Commandant took alarm and expelled the Missioners, who crossed over into the Dutch territory, where their preaching was freely allowed. Here they stayed and wrought for some time.

Shortly before this a widow owning a large estate on the French side of the border happened to engage as manager a Wesleyan Local Preacher from another colony named Seys. With some difficulty Mr. Seys won his employer's consent to instruct the Negroes, whose abandoned condition was deplorable. Through fear of repression by the Government, hearing at the same time of Hodge's mission, Seys gave up the services he had commenced on his mistress's premises and obtained leave for the Negroes to attend the Methodist meetings held not far away on Dutch soil. A number of these were converted ; and so welcome a change resulted in their behaviour that prejudice was dispelled from the mind of the proprietress. She herself went to hear the Methodist Minister, and in consequence became an earnest Christian believer ; and neighbouring planters were impressed in favour of the Gospel. Before many months had elapsed a settled preaching-place was on St. Martin's Island, and arrangements were made for regular visits from the St. Barts Missionary. The work developed so rapidly that in 1819 Jonathan Raynar was appointed Missionary for the newly constituted Circuit of ' St. Martin's and Anguilla,' which contained a joint membership of 330, a third of these belonging to the former island. This excellent though somewhat diffident Missionary, who came hither from Tobago, died within a few months of his arrival.

Notwithstanding this check, the work went forward. From 1820 onwards St. Martin had a separate Minister assigned to it. Before long a commodious chapel was built, and schools were set up in various parts of the island. The French Government became so sensible of the value of the Mission that it made to it a yearly grant of £100. This example the Dutch authorities followed. Official people and leading families in both parts of the island united themselves with the Methodist worshippers. For its size the St. Martin Mission became as prosperous as any in the West Indies. This small island was fertile and highly cultivated, and the two peoples occupying it were on very friendly terms. By the year 1825, when William Gilgrass



was the Missionary, the Church had grown to 203 in membership ; in 1829, under the vigorous John Cullingford, following up the two years' labours of John Nelson, the number had risen to 469. Cullingford was a man of 'undaunted courage,' who suffered and accomplished much through the twenty years of his unwearied West Indian service.

Up to this time the Methodist Preacher was the only Protestant Minister on St. Martin. A Roman Catholic priest settled in the French district ; subsequently a French Protestant Minister formed a congregation in Marigot, the capital upon the northern side of the island. After 1833, as the Anguilla population declined, that island was re-annexed to the St. Martin's Circuit. Emancipation did not come to the French-Dutch Negroes of St. Martin till long after the British West Indies received the boon.

MONTSERRAT was the last of the Leeward Group to be occupied by the Methodist Mission. A thoroughly British island, and lying but 22 miles south-west from Antigua, Methodists early found their way thither, and a Society-class of 12 members, conducted by a pious coloured Leader, was reported as far back as Coke's last visit in 1793. The little circle petitioned for a Minister, but the financial straits of Methodism in the neighbouring islands, and the legislative restrictions imposed in Montserrat, combined to defeat the request. Moreover, a large proportion of the settlers were Irish Roman Catholics of a bigoted type, from whom furious opposition was anticipated. Nowhere, indeed, was the Gospel more needed than in Montserrat. West Indian vice and ungodliness flourished here in their most outrageous forms. In point of healthfulness and natural beauty, this islet of 32 square miles is the pearl of the smaller Antilles. Its population is about equal to that of Nevis ; a century ago it was estimated at 12,000 ; subsequently the number declined to 9,000 or less ; in recent years it has recovered its former size.

The Methodist Class-meeting which reported itself to Dr. Coke persisted through much tribulation, until at last, in 1820, a Missionary appeared in Montserrat. This was John Maddock, who by his manliness and ability, and by the noble temper in which he met persecution, won a sure footing for the Mission. When, after fifteen months on the island, he was carried off by fever, in May, 1821, Maddock 'died,' as a local witness of

authority testifies, 'regretted by all in this colony without exception.' He fell in the prime of his youth, a Minister of but three years' standing. He had turned an empty store-house into a preaching-room, and soon filled this to overflowing, when he set about to build a chapel, to the erection of which people of all classes contributed. The admirable Charles Janion, who filled Maddock's place in the following year, consolidated the work so well begun. Maddock found at the outset ten Methodists on the island; when Janion left the Church had grown to 35. His successor was Thomas Kennington Hyde, just out of his probation, who conducted the Mission from 1822 to 1827. By the end of Hyde's term the Church membership, divided equally between slaves and free people, numbered 169.

Between 1827 and 1833 William Clough, Benjamin Gartside, and John Cullingford 'travelled' in Montserrat. Clough (1827-30) was an able, studious, self-possessed, and self-forgetting brother, 'pre-eminently a man of prayer,' whose eight years of toil in the islands (1825-33) undermined his constitution, resulting in his death twelve years after his return to England. Gartside, whose course in the West Indies ran nearly parallel to that of Clough, possessed more marked and demonstrative qualities; returning to England in 1835, his life extended forty-six years longer. He was 'a thoroughly good man' and a typical Methodist Preacher. Under his care the Montserrat Society greatly increased, numbering 280 when he handed over the charge. John Cullingford, who piloted the Mission through the crisis of Emancipation, saw a further growth in membership to 324.

The predominance of Romanism made Methodist advance slow and difficult in Montserrat. In hope of greater development, a second Missionary was given to the little island for a time; and Enoch Wood, afterwards so eminent in British North America, spent two out of the three years of his West Indian service on Montserrat (1826-28).

## VI

### THE WINDWARD AND NEIGHBOURING ISLANDS UNTIL EMANCIPATION

St. Vincent—Hostility of Planters—Steady Growth of Membership—William Gilgrass—Missionary Attitude to civil Administration—A Succession of successful Missionaries—The Hon. H. McDowell Grant—Lack of Educational Missionary Work—The Hurricane of 1831—Grenada—Georgetown—Dark Days followed by bright ones—Sir Richard Ottley—William Shrewsbury—Retrenchment—Barbados—A Disappointing Mission—Hostile Planters and devoted Supporters—Isaac Bradnack—Moses Rayner—W. J. Shrewsbury—Fierce Opposition—A Council of Public Safety—Mob Violence—Wreckage—A Debate in the House of Commons—Its Result—Rebuilding of the Bridgetown Chapel—Success at Last—Trinidad—Dangerous Opposition—Abraham Whitehouse—The Chapel closed—Local Authorities overruled—Samuel Woolley—Tobago—Jonathan Raynar—Slow Progress.

ST. VINCENT, in the middle of the Windward Islands, was from the time of Dr. Coke's first voyage to the West Indies an active centre of the Methodist propaganda. But not until the close of the century did this station take a leading place amongst the Circuits; by this date its Methodist membership had become comparable to that of Antigua or St. Kitts. When in 1806 District organization was introduced in the islands, St. Kitts was set at the head of the second District, although St. Vincent then reported a membership considerably over 2,000. This and the adjoining isles in Methodist occupation continued to be attached to Antigua—a subordination due to the generally backward state of the Mission in the later Group. However, in 1811 geographical convenience dictated the segregation of the Windwards, and the St. Vincent Circuit became the nucleus of a new District formed by annexing to it Barbados,<sup>1</sup> Grenada, and Trinidad, Antigua retaining Dominica. The Districts of Antigua, St. Kitts, and St. Vincent, thus separated, were

<sup>1</sup> Barbados, Trinidad, and Tobago, which form part of this Methodist District, are geographically and politically outside 'the Windward Islands.'

found too weak, so that in 1812 they were merged in one under the headship of Antigua. This cumbrous arrangement was carried on for seven years. In 1818, by which time the membership of the united District had grown to over 14,000, a re-partition was made in which all the Leeward Isles, including St. Kitts and its dependants, went with Antigua; to St. Vincent were assigned, beside the Windward Isles previously named, Tobago and Demerara (in British Guiana), to which Methodist work had extended of recent years. The outlying Demerara Mission in course of time grew into a District by itself. Apart from this, the St. Vincent District—to-day known by the name of 'Barbados and Trinidad'—remains in area what it was in 1818. Not till 1889, by the stationing of a Missionary at St. Lucia, was the Methodist occupation of the British Windward Islands actually completed.

We have related the tragic events marking the birth of the Mission in St. Vincent, which left an abiding impress upon its course. This island presented at the outset a complicated missionary problem. French and English were blended amongst its colonists; beside the mass of negro slaves, and the free black or coloured inhabitants scattered over its area, a large body of the aboriginal Caribs were planted on the western shore. The lamentable war of 1795, in which French and Caribs combined against the English, resulted in the removal of the greater part of both these diverse races, and the constituency of St. Vincent thus became assimilated to that of other islands in British occupation. New British settlers were introduced at this epoch, and a further importation of Negroes followed. The Missionaries found the St. Vincent slaves, many of whom were fresh from the Guinea coast, nearer to African heathenism than those of other regions—more ignorant and wildly superstitious, but at the same time less sophisticated and often more tractable.

While the majority of the planters and white folk were bitterly, some of them brutally, hostile to the Mission, the Missionaries had a small circle of warmly devoted allies of their own colour; nowhere did Methodism count kinder or worthier friends than in this isle of strife and persecution. The infamous Act of the St. Vincent Legislature, under which Matthew Lumb

<sup>1</sup> The West Indian Conference (1882-1904) partitioned the St. Vincent District into 'St. Vincent,' 'Barbados,' and 'Trinidad.' On the termination of that arrangement the three sections were reunited, under the title above given.



suffered, was annulled by the Crown in 1793. Early next year the Mission was reopened by the appointment of the admirable Thomas Owens. He reported for 1794 and 1795 a membership of 454, including four Whites, the remnant of a much larger flock. The five years extending from the resumption of the work to the termination of the Carib war were a period of extreme disquiet; the tenure of the Mission was doubtful, the number of its adherents fluctuating. The *Minutes* of 1795 and 1796 attach explanatory notes to the membership returns. 'This island and Grenada are now in so dreadful a state that the work of God seems quite at a stand.' For the latter year, when the membership figures at 481, the entry is: 'We had near 1,000 members in Society in St. Vincent before the war; but owing to the late insurrection of the Caribs, we cannot be exact in regard to the island at present.' Dr. Coke's prediction that Methodism would recover its predominance when the political disturbances ceased in St. Vincent, was amply fulfilled. The membership rose in 1797, under Richard Pattison's superintendency, to 1,000, more than doubling itself within the year. In the next two years, when Edward Turner was in charge, the figures reported were 1,621 and then 2,000. The martyrdom of Lumb and his companions, and the glaring injustice and cruelty of the persecution carried on by the slave-masters, had endeared Methodism to the black people. When the reign of terror was over and the Missionaries reappeared, they trooped to the preaching-places and pressed into the Church. Francis Hallett, the parish-clerk of Grenada turned Wesleyan Missionary, was junior colleague to Pattison and Turner on the St. Vincent Circuit at this period.

The returns of membership for St. Vincent from 1800 onwards show a commendable steadiness; there is little sign of the declension which we noted in the chief Leeward Circuits during the first decade of the new century. Either the St. Vincent Missionaries had guarded the door of the Church with special care—which we may well suppose in the case of John Taylor, who was Superintendent here for four years (1802-06)<sup>1</sup>—or the black people were less fickle and contentious and more

<sup>1</sup> Midway in his course at St. Vincent Taylor was compelled for reasons of discipline to reduce considerably the membership of the Circuit; at the same time he saw the Class-contributions *doubled*. The Mission had been in financial straits before he assumed the reins. When he left, in 1807, the chapel at Kingstown was still heavily in debt to Dr. Coke, who had advanced money for building it; but Taylor reports the Society as 'ready to settle' the account 'whenever Dr. Coke will.'

manageable than in some other colonies. The Missionaries' letters indicate that the latter was the case in a distinct degree. Though the character of the St. Vincent masters was low in some respects, they were comparatively kind to their slaves ; the Negroes were much more contented here than (for example) in Jamaica. Between 1800 and 1810 the Society membership rose from 2,000 to nearly 2,400. In 1808 a third Minister was assigned to the Circuit, on the promise to provide for him. The devoted Calverley Riley received this for his first appointment ; he served two years on St. Vincent. Earlier in the decade William Sturgeon spent here three out of the eight years of his West Indian labours, proving a valuable colleague to John Taylor ; he was a popular Preacher both with Blacks and Whites. Sturgeon was another of the cheery, devoted young Irish Ministers whom Dr. Coke enlisted for his favourite Mission. In 1806 he fell ill in Grenada, to which he had removed from St. Vincent, and died on the passage to Tortola, his wife's home. On the whole, the climate of St. Vincent was friendly to European life ; comparatively few deaths occurred in its missionary staff. Half as large again as Antigua, this island holds a population of about the same number ; its aspect and surface are wholly different. St. Vincent has been called ' the Switzerland of the West Indies ' ; the little country is full of rivers, and forests cover its heights, hence inland travelling is difficult. The area of 150 square miles is cut up into narrow winding dales, with a fringe of cultivated land of no great breadth, but uncommonly rich, bordering the coast. As Methodism spread through the island and the Missionaries were multiplied, from 1815 onwards, they were planted out at convenient points, a distribution that might with advantage have been earlier made. The capital, Kingstown, with its splendid harbour and its population of 4,000 or upward, occupies the south-western corner. Towards the north-west, under the shadow of the volcanic Mount Soufrière, stands the little old French town of Chateaubellair ; opposite to this, on the north-east shore, is Georgetown ; Biabou lies to the south-east. These places became important Methodist centres, as did Calliaqua, a lovely rural spot not far distant from Kingstown. At the above stations the newly added Ministers were fixed.

During the next decade (1810-20) the steady growth in the

strength of the Church continued. At the close of this period the membership had passed the level of 3,000, and Methodism counted among its adherents nearly half the population. It was in fact the Church of the island, the number of worshippers in other Communion being inconsiderable. When Dr. Coke first landed on St. Vincent, though the island was mapped out in parishes for civil purposes, no church building existed ; a single clergyman, residing at Kingstown, officiated in the court-house for the Government staff and a handful of white people. So far as concerned the Church of England, the situation remained much the same until after Emancipation. The advance of the Mission during this generally prosperous time was crossed by severe discouragements.

William Gilgrass, Superintendent from 1811 to 1813, in reporting toward the end of this term, relates in his caustic style how he has had to expel over 500 members from the Society, mostly at one place.

And no wonder ; what is one sermon in two weeks for such unhappy, stupid, pitiable, rationable animals as these ? If St. Paul with his zeal or John with his love were to visit them no oftener than we do or can, I could not look for much progress in Christianity.

Local Preachers were wanting ; for lack of fit freemen, the Class-leaders were mostly slaves ; the full staff of three Missionaries was inadequate for village oversight ; and at this moment Gilgrass was practically single-handed, one colleague having been called away and the other (Raby) being down with sickness. At the same time financial complications arising from the Society's debt to Dr. Coke caused friction and embarrassment. Myles Dixon was sent to the distressed man's help ; he reports :

I never saw so disorderly a Society as this at St. Vincent ; nor yet did I ever see a Society and a people manifest greater intelligence to hear and do the will of God.

This flock required much shepherding, and line upon line in the way of teaching. Dixon succeeded to the superintendency, with Abraham Whitehouse for assistant, and the Circuit resumed its progress. In 1815 attention was turned again to the Caribs, about 400 of whom remained in the island on reserved lands ; but the attempt

to evangelize them could not be carried out for want of a special Missionary. These people used the French tongue beside their old vernacular, and were ignorant of English. In 1816 vexatious restrictions, amounting to persecution, were imposed on the Mission by the Legislature,<sup>1</sup> which took alarm at the negro insurrection of that year in Barbados. The latter island lies 78 miles east from St. Vincent, and the two were in close intercourse.

Thomas Morgan, Superintendent in 1816-17, applied usefully to this Mission his financial ability. He had a plan for providing a missionary ship, which should ply not only amongst the islands, but between them and England. The scheme appears to have been well thought out, but failed to win support at home. In the course of his work Morgan received a letter from the Hon. Edward Jackson, a leading St. Vincent proprietor and resident, and a member of the council, which gives emphatic testimony to the spiritual success of Methodism. He writes:

Your doing away with that horrid idolatrous idea of Obeahism, which was prevalent in this island among not only slaves, but free coloured people, appears to have made more converts among the disaffected [of the planter class] than any other of your efforts. My own people were much infected, and used to practise this horrid Obeah system to a great extent, till a Mr. Taylor<sup>2</sup> . . . came to my estate. He pointed out the impossibility of serving two masters (God and the devil) in such plain, convincing language that it had the desired effect of converting vast numbers.

Mr. Jackson goes on to commend 'that excellent man, Mr. Priddie (who is an ornament to his colour,)' a coloured Local Preacher, as having 'had a great share in the conversion of many others.'

Morgan makes an interesting statement touching the reproach of preaching *equality* to the slaves raised against Methodism in the recent legislative proceedings in restraint of dissenting Preachers. He says:

<sup>1</sup> 'Dissenting Preachers' were required to enter into securities, 'themselves in £400 . . . and two freeholders in the like sum each,' that they should not inculcate anything 'unfriendly to the system of Government . . . or inconsistent with the duty slaves owe to their masters.' They must 'further take a solemn oath,' in disavowal of all connexion with anti-slavery movements and Societies in England. The Methodist Missionaries had given no occasion for this measure, but they were the only persons to whom the statute could apply.

<sup>2</sup> This must have been John Taylor, to whose preaching the description given is quite applicable.



If the charge refers to civil distinctions, we are clear in this matter ; for with existing distinctions in civil society we have nothing to do, except that we constantly affirm, ' Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,' and ' Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed.' If *moral* distinctions are meant, I am prepared to say that character alone is sufficient to determine in this matter, and that Scripture is the only standard to which we appeal as the test of such a character.

The opponents of Methodism affirmed that ' there was evidence enough to cause suspicion ' of disloyalty, and that ' the Missionaries conveyed inaccurate and most invidious information (to England) of the conduct of planters toward their slaves.' Undoubtedly much information did reach the mother country through this channel—especially from the testimony of returned Missionaries—which went to feed the rising flame of British indignation against colonial slavery ; on the charge of *inaccuracy*, the witnesses were well able to defend themselves. The planters could not put out the eyes nor stop the mouths of English visitors, whether Missionaries or other observers. As to the particular charge made by the hostile legislators of St. Vincent, Morgan is perfectly explicit : ' We convey *no* information to the African Institution, nor have we any connexion with that Society.'

The Wesleyan Ministers adhered strictly to the policy of non-interference with civil institutions laid down in the rules of the Missionary Society. They could not prevent nor disguise the fact that the spiritual elevation of the Negro was making for his enfranchisement ; and discerning slave-holders who were determined at all costs to maintain the existing system recognized in the Missionary their most dangerous antagonist. In spite of the abolition of the African slave trade by the Parliamentary Act of 1807, slaves continued to be smuggled into the islands ; the planters were angry at the British public getting wind of this fact, and suspected the Missionaries of being the tell-tales ! A further Bill was passed by the St. Vincent Legislature in 1818, imposing further disabilities on dissenting Preachers. George Bellamy, who was at this time Superintendent of the St. Vincent Circuit and Chairman of the District, appealed to the Governor to veto this unjust law. The protest led to a meeting of the Missionary at the Governor's table with two leading Members

of the House of Assembly, and resulted in a better understanding between the opposing parties; a compromise was made, under which the Mission was able to carry on its work practically unhindered. The continued improvement in the morals and behaviour of the slaves, to which there were striking testimonies in this island, stopped the mouths of gainsayers.

By the year 1820 the St. Vincent Mission counted 3,133 Church members. A fourth Missionary was added to the staff—still all too slender, in view of the deficiency of lay Stewards, Local Preachers, and educated Class-leaders. St. Vincent remained behind other island Circuits in this respect. John Mortier succeeded to Bellamy in the charge of the Mission; he returned twice to this Circuit at later dates (1827–29, 1830–33). Mortier became thoroughly acclimatized; with a brief interruption he laboured for thirty-four years on the islands, and was one of the most respected and useful Missionaries of his time. We shall have occasion to speak of him again when we come to Demerara. Chief of Mortier's colleagues at this period was Moses Rayner, a man of like spirit and efficiency, though not of the same physical tenacity. Rayner took the Superintendent's place in 1822. Next year the Circuit was put in charge of Samuel Woolley, who had been transferred from the Chairmanship of the Leeward to that of the Windward Islands. In the Stations for 1823 and 1824 there appears attached to St. Vincent a name amongst the most famous both in English and in British American Methodism—that of John Pope, the father of Dr. William Burt Pope and the brother of Henry and Richard Pope. Pope had 'travelled' three years in the northern colonies, when he was transferred to the West Indies. Here he laboured two years on St. Vincent, and two in Grenada; then his health failed and he went home to England, where he found it necessary to return to business. A man of strong intelligence and commanding character, John Pope rendered first-rate service during his brief course in the ministry. Thomas Payne, who laboured in the island from 1822 to 1826, similarly divided his eleven years' missionary course between North America and the West Indies. Retiring to England in 1828, he spent many useful and happy years in the home work, followed by a spell of supernumeraryship in the Bahamas (1861–70). Jonathan Edmondson, for so long a mainstay of

Methodism in this field, learned his business as a Missionary in Grenada and St. Vincent (1822-26), under Woolley's chairmanship.

By the year 1827 the membership reached the figure of 3,532. At this stage a fifth Minister was located on the island, and the single Circuit was divided into two, Kingstown covering the western, and Biabou the eastern side of the country—a division which held good for many years. The two Circuits fluctuated in relative importance; sometimes one, sometimes the other, claimed the third Missionary.

Amongst the younger St. Vincent Missionaries of note was John Briddon, who died at thirty-five, after ten years of exemplary piety and self-sacrificing toil pursued to exhaustion. William Fidler, Briddon's contemporary, proved one of the few long-service men of the West Indian staff; above forty years he kept the field, travelling every Circuit of this District in turn, and in several of the Leeward Isles besides, everywhere faithful, useful, and honoured. Richard Hornabrook<sup>1</sup> entered the service a little later. Serving his apprenticeship on St. Vincent, he grew into an experienced and influential Missionary, as his subsequent work in Demerara especially showed. The most notable young Minister associated with St. Vincent at the present epoch was William Henry Rule, who laboured here from 1827 to 1831. This little man was a perfect bundle of talent, enthusiasm, and energy. In early days he had come under the spell of Richard Watson's dream of the Mission to Palestine, and had caught a glimpse of the Orient in his previous year's ministry at Malta. The appointment to the West crossed, but did not quench, his first love; while working hard at St. Vincent Rule's brain was full of Hebrew and Arabic and the missionary problems of the East. When affliction enforced his return to England his earlier hopes revived. His greatest work was done at Gibraltar, where he stood at the gate of the highway to Moslem lands. Finally he became the founder of the Army work of Methodism.

St. Vincent Methodism reached its maximum of prosperity for this period in 1829, when the joint Circuit membership amounted to 3,724. James Cheeswright and Edward Grieves were then the Ministers of the Second Circuit, the former

<sup>1</sup> His sons are John Hornabrook, Secretary and then President of the British Conference (1903-10), and Richard Fraser Hornabrook, 'one time President of the South African Conference.

concluding his ten missionary years. The malady which drove him home permitted his labouring there to a ripe age ; he was admired for his cheery disposition and busy activity. Grieves, who served at Biabou from 1829 to 1831, had a brief course, falling a victim to the climate of British Guiana in 1833. He married a Creole lady owning slaves to the value of £1,000, who released them at her wedding. Grieves was a great detester of slavery.

From 1830 to 1849 the island was favoured, and the work of the Mission furthered, by the raising up of an active and enlightened philanthropist among the proprietary class—a rare phenomenon in the West Indies. This was the Hon. Hay McDowell Grant, whom Bickford speaks of as ‘ the just and good attorney of the Trust Estates.’ Mr. Grant controlled some of the largest plantations on the island, and was a member of the local Legislature. He wielded an influence naturally accruing to great business ability combined with force of character, and held liberal views as to the treatment of the Negroes. McDowell Grant’s presence, and the confidence reposed in him by both Blacks and Whites, were of peculiar advantage to St. Vincent during the Emancipation crisis.

Between 1829 and 1833 the Methodist Society diminished to the extent of nearly a fourth of its membership, declining to the point at which it stood fourteen years earlier ; it still formed nearly half the constituency of the District (including Demerara). No single scandal occurred ; there was no schism nor disaffection. It may be noted that St. Vincent was ill supplied with both Day Schools and Sunday Schools as compared with the Antigua or St. Kitts Mission, which were of about the same size and standing. This defect, which the Missionaries could not supply for lack of educated lay helpers, goes to account for the falling off in the second generation of Methodist life. The Missionaries in their letters deplore the listlessness and neglect of religion that had come over the black folk—a spiritual lethargy observed in other quarters at this period due to the unsettlement of the negro mind and its preoccupation with the approaching enfranchisement. The decline was greatest in the years following 1831, when, along with Barbados, St. Vincent, which rarely suffers from this kind of calamity, was visited on August 11 with one of the most frightful and destructive hurricanes ever known.



Buildings of every sort in exposed places were levelled with the ground, and most of the Methodist chapels amongst them ; whole towns were swept out of existence. Fruit-trees were blown down in all directions, and crops torn out of the ground. ' This part of the island,' writes Mr. Hornabrook from the Biabou Circuit, ' presents one vast scene of desolation and misery.' Though the missionary families were mercifully preserved, many hundreds of lives were lost and the poorer free population was reduced to utter want. Such a wreckage was bound to cripple the Church ; though a generous relief-fund was raised in England for the sufferers, the hurricane of 1831 left St. Vincent Methodism impoverished for years thereafter.

The somewhat smaller but better populated GRENADA, lying to the south of St. Vincent, to which it is linked by the rocky chain of the Grenadines, was visited by Dr. Coke and really occupied, but it has been a comparatively unfruitful ground for the Methodist Gospel. As in the case of Dominica, while Grenada had long been in British possession, its colonists were largely of French origin. Hence Romanism was entrenched in the country, and put in the way of our progress almost insuperable barriers. Grenada, moreover, resembles Dominica, and differs from St. Vincent, in the treacherous nature of its climate, which proved in the early days lamentably hindering to the Mission.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Coke nursed carefully the tender plant of the Grenada Mission. Hither he sent that choice and saintly Jersey man, Abraham Bishop, who laid his life down here in 1793. Next year Benjamin Pearce, one of the most vigorous and capable of the first group of West Indian Missionaries, succumbed to fever when on the point of commencing work in Grenada. No successor could be supplied at the time, and the Methodist Church of some 80 members was kept together by Francis Hallett, parish-clerk to that excellent friend of Dr. Coke and of Methodism, the evangelical clergyman Dent. Hallett

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, James Bickford, who 'travelled' here in 1846-49, speaks flatteringly of the climate, describing Grenada as 'the Italy of the West Indies. Its clear, bright atmosphere, tempered by the trade-winds, the hospitality and friendliness of its inhabitants, and complete freedom of caste, make it one of the most inviting places of residence in any part of the Antilles' (*Autobiography*, p. 53). A mixture of French blood in the islands seems to have tended to a brighter sociality. Other authorities speak of the climate as good, and the uplands as particularly bracing. Grenada is even a health-resort for Trinidad invalids. One is tempted to account for the succession of deaths and disablements amongst the early Grenada Missionaries by some unfortunate choice of situation or faulty construction in the Mission-house.

saved the infant Society of Grenada ; he proved himself so devoted to Methodism and apt for its work that in 1796 the Conference on Coke's recommendation took him into the ministry ; for a year longer he remained in the Grenada Circuit, acting now as the official Minister. The Society increased to a membership of 100.

The Grenada Mission continued for many years at about the same level reached in Hallett's time. More than once the post was left vacant. Francis Jeune, a French-speaking native of Jersey, and 'a holy man of pleasing temper,' died there in his first year of ministry (1799-1800) ; William Sturgeon died in 1806, William Lill ten years later. A Missionary referred to in Coke's report as 'Mr. T.' failed in character at Grenada and left a trail of mischief behind him. Excellent men laboured on this field—including Johnston and Willis, beside those above named—and great things continued to be expected from Grenada, but in vain. There was little or no persecution. The planters were polite and hospitable, but few of them wanted preaching on their estates ; they cared nothing about Methodism, even where the priest had not prejudiced them. The slaves of the interior spoke a broken French—a foreign language to most of the Missionaries ; such notions of Christianity as they possessed were derived from Popery. They were ignorant and brutish in the extreme ; touching them but little to any religious effect, Romanism had sealed their hearts against a purer faith. Hardly anywhere besides in the West Indies were the Negroes generally so impervious to Methodist teaching.

For the first twenty years of this period (1793-1813) the labours of the Missionaries were mainly confined to Georgetown, the capital, containing about 5,000 inhabitants. Here we had a small uncomfortable chapel, attended chiefly by free black and coloured folk, with a sprinkling of Whites ; from these the Society was gathered, which remained small in proportion to the congregation and at times gave much trouble to its pastor. The trouble was aggravated by the misconduct of a Missionary, who was sent home under grave charges—the second instance of the kind in this unfortunate station. This scandal left an ill-odour which hung about Methodism for years afterwards ; the two parties in the Church long continued to discuss the unsavoury case with acrimony.

The appointment of Myles Dixon (1814-16) to Grenada proved the beginning of happier days. This admirable Missionary—preceded by good John Dace, who started a Sunday School at Georgetown—depicts in the following terms the state of things he discovered :

I find Grenada a very pleasant place, but am sadly confined in my labours. The people are kind to their Preachers, but by no means very loving among themselves. I never before was in a place where there was so much profession of experimental religion united with so much manifest suspicion, prejudice, and uncharitableness ; a single ambiguous word from a member is sufficient to electrify the whole Society ! . . . This makes unhappy work, and is one cause of our little prosperity. Another cause is the smallness and inconveniency of our chapel.

In 1815 the Mission gained a valuable helper through the conversion of Sir Richard Ottley, the Chief Justice of the island, who subsequently played a distinguished part in the administration of Ceylon. Always a man of dignified and blameless character, this gentleman, hearing of Mr. Dixon's able ministry, requested a visit from him in a time of domestic trouble. The interview led to a friendship, through which Christianity became for the Chief Justice a vivid and saving reality. He took an active interest in the Church, and was made a Class-leader. Sir Richard's accession introduced the Missionary to new circles in Grenada Society, and Methodism began to find its way out into the country. In the course of next year progress was checked, as in St. Vincent, through the restrictive measures imposed in consequence of the Barbados insurrection, which threw the slave-holders of the Windward Islands into a panic. For some time all public meetings were prohibited between the hours of six p.m. and five a.m.—a rule that almost vetoed the missioning of the slaves. In January, 1816, Dixon was obliged to close his work in Grenada and retire to England. He had transformed the religious situation and given Methodism a new status in the island. Despite the difficulties he encountered the Society was raised to a membership of 180 and placed on a level from which continuous advance was possible. Dixon's place was filled by William Lill, a young man of superior talents and winning disposition, who found favour on all sides. But he arrived in feeble health ; before the year's end he was in his grave. On Lill's death the Circuit was left to itself for a whole year, but little numerical decline ensued.

After the above grievous losses Grenada was fortunate in securing William J. Shrewsbury for its next Superintendent (1817-19). A second Missionary was now appointed, although three years earlier Dixon reported the maintenance of a single married Minister as beyond the resources of the Circuit. William Dixon Goy, the young colleague assigned to Shrewsbury, was a man after his heart—of sound understanding, lovable spirit, methodical and studious habits; his habits, his character, might be 'expressed by the one word *fidelity*.' Goy spent four years in Grenada (1822-26) out of the six to which his service on the islands was limited; one of the many who, under the severe conditions of missionary work, succumbed to a tropical climate. He lived to complete a full term of honourable ministry at home. Goy distinguished himself by learning French in order to preach to the country Negroes of Grenada. Under Shrewsbury and Goy the Grenada Mission prospered as never before; when the latter, who was Superintendent from 1820 onwards, left the island, the Church membership had mounted to 328. Before Goy removed, William Squire, the subsequent evangelist of Lower Canada, was added as a probationer to the Grenada staff, which for three years (1821-24) included three Missionaries. Squire's constitution demanded a colder climate; his passionate preaching told upon his hearers in the island while he remained. Cheeswright, Rayner, Edmondson, Murray—choice and efficient men—were Goy's and Squire's colleagues up to the middle of the twenties.

The second Missionary was granted in 1818 at the request of the Hon. John Ross, who controlled a number of estates on the island and had awaked to the value of the Gospel for the slave. This gentleman proposed to build a chapel on each of the large properties under his direction—an example followed by other owners; by the month of July thirteen estates were reported open to the Missionaries. This put a new face on Methodist work in the island. The slaves, however, were slow to respond to the efforts made on their behalf. The language difficulty impeded communication; and where services were held amongst them, the Negroes in the first instance showed themselves stupidly indifferent. The few who were impressed required a prolonged catechumenate before they could with any fitness be admitted to the Church.



This backwardness and apathy characterized the mass of the Grenada slaves until after Emancipation.

About this time Sir Richard Ottley wrote to Hatton Garden begging for help toward building a new chapel at Georgetown. He says :

Our prospects are very encouraging ; we have every rational ground to anticipate a considerable extension of Christianity amongst the poor slaves, and some reason to hope that the other ranks of society may receive benefit. Methodism, which formerly was the theme of invective and the subject of scurrility and abuse, is now much more respected. The two Preachers are pious and amiable men, and have become generally esteemed. Mr. Ross has invited them to preach in about twelve estates. Religion is more esteemed than ever it has been in Grenada. The chapel is frequently attended by the higher orders, who submit to miserable accommodation.

The reflection of the Missionary Committee on hearing the last sentence would inevitably be that 'the higher orders' who resorted to the chapel, and felt its inconvenience, should themselves bear the cost of the better building required ! In 1824 a revival of religion took place at Georgetown, by which the Society was increased. The work in the country was sorely disappointing ; 'there are some estates,' the reporter writes, 'on which we have been preaching for several years, and not the least good is apparent ; the Negroes attend with extreme reluctance'—they seemed to regard this as another task imposed by their masters—'and they hear (when they do not sleep) without the smallest concern or desire of receiving good.' Manifestly, the chord of sympathy between slave and Missionary had not been struck as yet. The contrast between the Grenada slaves and those of St. Vincent was astonishing.

With Squire's removal in 1824 the staff was reduced again to two (John Mortier and Thomas Murray), the number of members at this date being 332. Five years later, though the Georgetown Society continued to grow, the second Minister was withdrawn, Joseph Fletcher being left in sole charge. This retrenchment we can only explain as signifying that the attempt to evangelize the French-speaking country Negroes had failed and was for the present abandoned. The proprietors and managers who ten years earlier had encouraged the endeavour grew weary of it and withdrew their subsidies.

This work coming to an end, and the Mission being again confined principally to the Church and congregation of Georgetown, there was nothing to justify the employment of more than one Minister on the island. Joseph Fletcher, the Grenada Minister from 1828 to 1838, had the singular experience of serving both in the East and West Indies. He was John Horner's colleague in the abortive Mission to Bombay (1818-21), from which place he returned home reported as quite unfit for the tropics. Notwithstanding, on renewing his offer for foreign service he was sent to the West Indies, and did ten years' good work in the Windward Islands and British Guiana. Joseph Horner Fletcher, of Auckland, N.Z., was Joseph Fletcher's son. William Fidler and John Briddon served successively in Grenada between 1829 and 1833. Under the ministry of the latter there was an awakening at Georgetown which added a third to the Grenada membership, raising it to 458. Of this number less than 200 were slaves—doubtless town-slaves—a proportion entirely different from that prevailing in the West Indian Circuits.

On the little GRENADINE ISLANDS, a small religious Society of Methodist leanings formed itself in Mustique about the year 1810, comprising 30 members drawn from various Christian denominations. This company was visited twelve years later by Jonathan Edmondson, who took it under pastoral care, enrolling 45 members in the Society thus recognized. Edmondson found the Grenadine Englishmen wishful for Methodist ordinances, and for the religious instruction of their slaves; 'the managers,' he writes to the Committee, 'second our efforts beyond expectation.' The Grenadines were reported in 1824 as ripe for the appointment of a Missionary. It was impossible, however, to spare a man for this outlying and diminutive field; the little scattered Church had to be content with occasional visits from the Grenada Missionary. At a later time the second Minister was restored to Grenada with a view to meeting the needs of these dependent islets, on the chief of which, named Carriacou, a good chapel had been built and a Society of considerable size formed.

The important island of BARBADOS was for the first forty years a scene of grief and disappointment to the Missionary Society. Through a long day of almost fruitless toil, attended with contumely and injustice, Missionaries 'laboured' here

'and did not faint.' The causes of the persistent hostility pursuing the Mission on this island have been indicated above (Chapter II.); they were rooted in the peculiar character and antecedents of Barbados society. Bridgetown, the focus of affairs for the island, was one of the most turbulent places in the British Empire. Its antipathy to Methodism resembled that manifested in the mob-violence and the genteel rowdyism which assailed John Wesley's evangelists of the eighteenth century in England. But the motives natural to a godless and coarsely vicious community, animated by a strong infusion of aristocratic pride and of contempt for novelties in religion, were in this case raised to fever-heat through the Missionaries' friendship for the Negro, exciting the suspicion that they were agents of the anti-slavery movement in England, to which was added the belief that their preaching encouraged rebellion and made for the overthrow of slavery. Of these prejudices it was almost impossible to disabuse the minds of the ordinary white folk, who in Bridgetown and Barbados formed a more compact and demonstrative popular body than anywhere else in the islands. Colour-hatred, the contempt and fear lying deep in the heart of the slave-holding caste made more angry by an uneasy conscience, were the spring of the forty years' tribulation which Methodism endured in Barbados.

In 1793 the Methodists possessed a small chapel of their own, ill-lighted and badly situated, but in the centre of Bridgetown, which had been built by the strenuous exertions of Benjamin Pearce. Here was gathered a Society numbering 51 people—34 Whites, 7 coloured persons, and 10 Blacks. For a whole generation the Church membership never exceeded this total; the returns indicate the absence of continuous pastoral oversight; the membership was often *estimated* rather than exactly known. Baiting the Methodists seems to have been a common entertainment of the Bridgetown roughs. The Preacher's life was made a burden to him through insult and annoyance; repeatedly he was compelled to withdraw, and his post was left vacant and preaching suspended. During the first thirty years but two or three Missionaries held their ground in Barbados for more than twelve months—many failed to do that. The chapel when in use was the scene of habitual disturbance; interruptions of public worship of the most unseemly kind were organized, and the magistrates

had neither the power nor the will to afford protection from these.

Daniel Graham, the excellent young man whom Dr. Coke sent here in 1793, died in a few months from fever. His successor in some way discredited himself, and was dismissed the service<sup>1</sup>; his misconduct was quoted many years later as a cause of the disesteem for Methodism in Bridgetown. Not until the appointment of Isaac Bradnack in 1802 was any effectual stand made against the tide of persecution, Bradnack was a strong, courageous, and eloquent young man, with a commanding air about him, who evidently impressed the Bridgetown public. While he remained (for nearly two years),

he was the means of converting the impenitent, stirring up the careless, comforting and building up believers, and bringing some audacious Whites to public justice for disturbing the Church during service.

After his first six months' experience Bradnack reports a great change in the aspect of the congregation and the temper of the people; he was hopeful about the future—found a greater prospect of increase in the white membership than in the black. The magistrates and Government officials treated him with respect; the Steward of the Society wrote begging that his ministry might be continued. Amongst the 'many inconveniences and hindrances' he finds in Barbados, Bradnack dwells upon the want of 'a convenient chapel,' of 'a burying-ground,'<sup>2</sup> and of 'a house for Preachers.' There are three Leaders in the Bridgetown Society; good openings in the country, but *no horse*.<sup>3</sup> A breakdown in health obliged Bradnack to resort to England; on his return he was transferred to Jamaica. Worthy Missionaries followed him, but the impression he had made was difficult to sustain—few men had Bradnack's power of coping with a turbulent populace. Richard Pattison in 1805 describes the evening preaching as 'carried on amid indescribable noise and confusion.' John

<sup>1</sup> The same man some years later forfeited his ministry and the Church by unworthy transactions in property at St. Bartholomew. His conduct in Barbados led to his suspension in 1795; but he was reinstated in the ministry, with the unfortunate result just indicated. Several of the Missionaries enlisted about this time turned out badly.

<sup>2</sup> This want impeded Methodism in Barbados for many years. Bigoted clergymen threatened Methodists that they should have *no grave* unless they abandoned Dissent, and their bodies would be flung into the sea!—a fear which operated as a strong deterrent. There being no waste or open ground in the island the burial question was acute.



Robinson, who arrived in 1807, 'laboured for a few months with great success,' until struck down by fever; he speaks of the 'violence of persecution' as 'abated.' After his death the Circuit once more was derelict. Gilgrass in 1810 laments: 'My hopes of doing much good at present are very faint. . . . Our finances are low indeed. . . . I ask how I and family are to be supported!' On his withdrawal the post again was left unfilled. In 1814 James Whitworth and Jeremiah Boothby, who were here together, made vigorous representations to the Home Committee upon the outlook in Bridgetown, pressing on it the alternative of undertaking a considerable expenditure here or abandoning the station. Before sailing from England, Boothby had been instructed to prospect for a new chapel; he reports that Whitworth had already a site in view, with sufficient timber for building, to be secured for £2,000. The present premises are worth, at the most, £350. 'The place we now have called a chapel,' Boothby writes, 'is not worthy of the name. . . . The fabric is tottering; the first gale will probably level it with the ground.' Despite its bad condition the building draws a large congregation, a third of whom sometimes have to listen outside for want of room. The two Ministers have begun to canvass for subscriptions, but must be assured of substantial aid from home. 'A burying-ground, chapel, and horse' are three indispensables. There was another lull in the persecution. Boothby was a lively and sometimes powerful evangelistic Preacher; he gained the ear of the Bridgetown multitude. A young man in his first appointment, he unhappily injured his usefulness and caused division in the little Church by an injudicious speech reflecting upon the coloured people. Boothby's success, however, was a hopeful sign, forbidding the desertion of Barbados; it was confirmed by the impression which Joseph Ward made at Bridgetown by two or three sermons he preached on the way to his station in the Bahamas. Ward so much charmed the hearers that the chief persecutors came to listen to him, and joined in a petition for his remaining as Minister here. This, of course, could not be. Soon afterwards the negro insurrection of 1816 in Barbados overcast missionary prospects once more. The revolt was not dangerous in itself; but it was regarded as an ominous symptom, and caused alarm throughout the islands. The Synods of 1816

and 1817 gave full attention to the case of Barbados ; they concluded that the Mission might still prosper by God's blessing, if equipped with proper plant and if suitably and continuously manned. The Chairman was directed to make Barbados his especial care. The Home Committee was brought to the same mind ; from this time the Barbados Circuit began to 'look up.'

Through the long night of distress and hope deferred the Methodist Society in Bridgetown held together and maintained an unfaltering witness. Its nucleus was the company of devoted friends gathered by Dr. Coke on his visits. Chief amongst these was Father Francis Brown, a saint of rare quality, whose faith, patience, and meekness of wisdom nothing could discompose. He persisted in the assurance of the coming of brighter days, and lived to see them dawn. By his side stood Mr. Beck, described by Moister as 'an old disciple of blessed memory.' Mrs. Ann Gill, another friend and correspondent of Dr. Coke, was for long a mother in Israel to the little flock ; of her we shall have occasion to write later. Always there were three or four Leaders on whom the Minister could count, who kept the Church in being when the pastor's place was vacant. Again and again the harassed Missionary refers to the comfort he finds in the attachment and worth of this choice Society ; there was no other circle of English Methodists at this time in the West Indies equal to that found at Bridgetown. 'The congregations,' writes the Preacher stationed here in 1808, are 'thoughtless, inattentive, unconcerned ; but the members, though few, are remarkable for piety, diligence, and zeal.' The character of the Society was the salvation of Methodism in Barbados ; such a Church, feeble as it might be, the Lord could not forsake.

In 1818, after another interregnum, Moses Rayner took charge of this station, and went about his task with discretion and energy. He early paid his respects to the Governor, securing a friend in him, and set Methodism in a better light with the public authorities. To the chronic annoyances of the street and the newspapers he showed himself good-humouredly indifferent ; for the time these were abated. Soon after his arrival he writes :

It is said that of late a change for the better has taken place ; our congregations are quiet and attentive, with the exception of a few

individuals disposed to levity and talk ; but I understand this is not uncommon in Divine service at other places.'

He is delighted to find a Sunday School established, containing 'upwards of 100 scholars,' and 'in a thriving state.' This had been commenced by a Leader of the Society who had seen this institution at work in St. Vincent. 'We abound with suitable teachers,' says Rayner—although the Church comprised but 33 members ! He goes on to say :

When I view Bridgetown, seeing it so extensive and populous,<sup>1</sup> and when I think of the many years it has had the Gospel and of the success attained in other places, I wonder why so few have believed our report.

Many local causes, he intimates, 'have operated to prevent success.' A prejudice has been formed 'in the mind of the community that will require patience, perseverance, and time for its full removal. And what the place requires in this respect I verily believe it should have ; for I have not seen such a field of labour in the West Indies. The slave population is double that of Antigua ; but little good can be expected from work amongst them 'without a regular supply of Missionaries.' The town demands the whole attention of one Minister.

Our chapel here is almost in ruins ; the building is in many respects inconvenient, and in appearance disreputable. Although the Society does exceedingly well, considering its number, it is not likely the whole of the income it yields will be sufficient to meet the table expenses of a Preacher.

Mr. Brown, the senior trustee, writes to London supporting the Missionary's statement of the case. He believes the prejudice against Methodism, though violent in certain quarters, to be neither deep nor widespread ; he lays stress upon the incessant changes and uncertainties of the ministerial supply as a cause of the lack of progress ; and he makes a strong plea for assistance toward the erection of a suitable chapel. The population of the island at this date was about 130,000, of

<sup>1</sup> Bridgetown to-day contains about 17,000 souls. Probably its population numbered not much less a century ago. Until the cessation of the slave-trade this port supplied the chief slave-market of the Caribbean Sea. The slave-traffic was a source of great commercial profit, but of fearful demoralization.

whom 100,000 were slaves, five-sixths of these being Barbados-born.

Rayner was allowed to proceed with his chapel scheme. He secured local subscriptions to the amount of £600.<sup>1</sup> His exertions in this cause were beyond praise. 'To erect the chapel he toiled and laboured, with his hands when necessary'; he superintended and watched every part of the work, and showed unfailing practical resource; 'he has certainly accomplished what no Missionary beside himself could have effected.' He expects the chapel, when finished, will be 'the most substantial and European in the West Indies.' But he finds absorption in this task 'not immediately good either for body or soul.' Rayner had the high satisfaction of seeing the sanctuary completed and in a fair way to being speedily cleared of debt. But the Church membership, which he strictly guarded, fell in 1818 to its lowest point in numbers.

Moses Rayner was succeeded by William James Shrewsbury, who arrived at Bridgetown from Grenada early in 1820. A young colleague fresh from England, William Larcom, was assigned him, who, however, in a few months was transferred to Tobago. The two wrote a letter to England in March of that year, which was published in the *Notices*, and later brought great odium upon Mr. Shrewsbury for its too truthful delineation of Barbadian character.

The fear of God [the Missionaries write] is hardly to be seen in this place. The free black people who live in town are, many of them, exceedingly given to profanity, especially the watermen; for they swear and blaspheme the name of God almost with every breath. . . . As regards the moral condition of the slaves, that is nearly the same; polygamy, adultery, fornication, blasphemies, theft, lying, quarrelling, and drunkenness—these are the crimes to which the *generality* are addicted. They live and die like the beasts of the earth. . . . We are happy, however, to find a few honourable exceptions.

The letter goes on to describe an estate where the condition of the Negroes is very different. Then it continues:

The Island is divided into eleven parishes, and there is a church erected and a clergyman appointed to each; but it is a rare thing to see a slave within the church walls. . . . Not that they are prohibited

<sup>1</sup> The entire sum raised locally was £770—a remarkable amount for so poor a people; the total cost was £987—an outlay wonderfully small for so good a building.



from going to church—the clergymen would be glad to see them attend ; but no man compels, no man *invites* them to come in. They are lost, and no man goes to seek and save them ; they are as much disregarded and neglected as if they possessed no immortal souls.

Toward the close of this report grateful mention is made of several planters who welcomed the Missionaries to their estates. The children of the Bridgetown Sunday School are, the writers say, ‘ the rudest that were ever seen in any land ! ’ At this date the number of slaves on the Church roll was only ten.

Before the end of 1820 John Nelson arrived to Shrewsbury’s assistance—a man much beloved by his fellow workers. Nelson brought a wife with him ; Shrewsbury was still single. Vacating the Mission-house in favour of his junior colleague, the latter went into lodgings. The labours of these two devoted men, especially Shrewsbury’s powerful and awakening preaching, began to tell upon the people. The Society gradually increased. Shrewsbury’s fearlessness in the reproof of sin and his keen dialectic brought him into frequent encounters with the profane and insolent, and made him dreaded by them. In November of that year his work was interrupted by a summons from Demerara, where the two Missionaries, Bellamy and Ames, were struck down in succession by yellow fever. In this distressing crisis he rallied the infant Societies at Georgetown and the neighbourhood, which were in danger of utter discouragement and dispersal. Toward the close of January Shrewsbury returned to his charge in Barbados. A letter written somewhat later to his brother Goy, who remained in Grenada, reveals the powerful exercises of soul lying behind Shrewsbury’s ardent ministry at this season. He writes of the ‘ deep, familiar, constant, awfully delightful communion with God ’ which he is seeking after. Toiling and testifying in this spirit, it is no wonder that he was able to report at the same period :

The wilderness begins to blossom as the rose. The Society was never in a better state. . . . The work of grace is becoming deeper in almost every heart. The Classes and prayer-meetings are well attended ; the spirit of grace and supplication rests upon us. . . . Several very wicked young men have been truly converted to God. Since the District Meeting 24 have been added to our number. The finances of the Mission also are improving.

He anticipates soon remitting £50 to Hatton Garden, instead of drawing upon the Treasurers. In October he describes the new Bridgetown Chapel as 'too strait' for the Sunday evening congregation. Everything appeared to promise a firm establishment of the Methodist Church in this town where its adversaries had been so many and so bitter, putting it in a position to evangelize the negro slaves throughout Barbados. On the first day of April, 1823, Mr. Shrewsbury made a suitable and happy marriage to a Miss Hilaria King, whose family were well known and much respected in the island; her brother was a physician of high character, practising in Bridgetown. The lady, who had been brought to the knowledge of Christ through Mr. Shrewsbury's ministry, and had shown herself, in face of much opposition from her friends, a thorough-going Methodist, belonged to a class which had made its wealth through slave-labour; the wedded pair accordingly renounced on their marriage their prospective share in the family inheritance, while remaining on affectionate terms with Mrs. Shrewsbury's family.

Although the Mission had little success as yet with the plantation Negroes, the tide of Methodism continued to rise in Bridgetown, as was evidenced by two occurrences in the first half of 1823—the final instalment of debt upon the chapel premises was discharged, and the collections at the Missionary Anniversary, held on June 25, amounted to double the sum realized a year before. But there were omens amid this growing prosperity of trouble in store. Mr. Shrewsbury was made the mark of gross insult in public places; he had many unscrupulous personal enemies. 'There was a force and pungency about his reproofs of sin' which stung impenitent offenders almost to madness. An observer acquainted with Bridgetown society stated that

where before his arrival Methodism had been treated with indifference and contempt, an easy-going rector having intimated that 'it could not do much harm,' the bold and withering denunciations of vice which Mr. Shrewsbury's conscience compelled him to utter accumulated wrath for the coming storm.

A marked effect of his preaching was that the coloured women of the town refused to live in concubinage with white men. The rage of the carnal mind was stirred in the profligates,

who, when they found themselves baulked of their prey, said one to another, 'Shrewsbury has done this.'<sup>1</sup> His life was attempted by a half-crazy fellow, doubtless under the instigation of others, who soon after made away with himself. The common libel against obnoxious Missionaries—that they were in league with the Anti-slavery Society—was put in circulation in Shrewsbury's case. Barbadian public opinion was inflamed just then by the reports of the Parliamentary proceedings in England respecting colonial slavery, and by the passing of Canning's resolution in the House of Commons foreshadowing its abolition.

These causes of suspicion and anger smouldering amongst the white population burst into fierce flame on the arrival of the news of the slave revolt in Demerara. In the Bridgetown Commercial Rooms the false statement was posted up that 'the Methodist clergymen of Demerara are both imprisoned, they being deeply implicated in the insurrection.' Garbled extracts from Shrewsbury's letter of March, 1820, were circulated, exhibiting him as wholesale libeller of the Barbadians. He was said to have declared that 'if the slaves cannot otherwise obtain their freedom, they ought to rise and take it by force.' In self-defence, he placed in the public rooms a copy of the *Missionary Notices* containing the full text of the obnoxious communication, the terms of which, though within the bounds of truth, were not calculated to propitiate popular feeling. The newspapers of the island increased the exasperation by distorted quotations from, and malevolent comments upon, the notorious letter, and, by misleading references to Shrewsbury's sermons, putting sentiments into his mouth he had never uttered. Wild reports of his sayings and doings were current, growing more outrageous as they passed from lip to lip. The furor culminated in an organized attack on the congregation made at the evening service of Sunday, October 5. Glass bottles filled with disgusting mixtures were thrown in from the door amongst the crowded people, one of these being aimed at the Preacher's head. The

<sup>1</sup> Many years afterwards a gentleman then in another part of the West Indies, who had been, to his subsequent sorrow, an accomplice in the plot against Methodism, informed a Wesleyan Missionary in considerable detail how the destruction of the chapel was organized by an elderly retired military officer residing at Bridgetown, who kept himself in the background. This unprincipled man had been deprived of his paramour through the effect of Methodist preaching upon her conscience, and had vowed vengeance against the Preacher and his chapel.

attack, though causing extreme confusion and alarm, resulted in no serious injuries ; the congregation recovered its calmness, and Mr. Shrewsbury was able to resume and conclude the service. The reward offered for information against the perpetrators of the outrage only excited derision ; it was evident that the exploit of Sunday night was hugely popular, and that worse things were in preparation. A magistrate and Member of Assembly told Shrewsbury's father-in-law that ' if a sufficient number would join him, he would go and pull the chapel down at noon-day ! ' Next Sunday, writes Shrewsbury,

As I came down from the dwelling-house<sup>1</sup> and entered the side-door of the chapel, the sight was truly intimidating. Without the chapel and through the whole length of the street there was an immense concourse of people, some ' breathing out threatenings and slaughter ' ; within, beside the fine congregation of my regular and serious hearers, there were planted round the pulpit and by the pulpit-stairs from twenty to thirty of the gentlemen mob, apparently ready for any mischief when those without should make a beginning. . . . As we rose from prayer, two men, wearing masks and holding swords and pistols, came galloping down the street, and who fired their pistols as they came opposite the chapel door, but caused no damage.

These men were chased off by a couple of officers' servants, whose masters were amongst the worshippers. The party surrounding the pulpit, it transpired, were armed with crackers, which they were to let off amongst the congregation at the above signal, intending to assault the Preacher and dispose of him amidst the uproar. Some one cried ' Fire ! ' at the sound of the first pistol-shot, disconcerting the rowdies within, who fled or subsided ; the people were reassured, and Mr. Shrewsbury was able to carry through the service, preaching with his usual calmness and effectiveness—his last sermon, as it proved, in Barbados.

On Monday, the 14th, Shrewsbury received a notice summoning him to answer for not having enrolled in the local militia ; his exemption under the Toleration Act was contested by some of the magistrates. As the hour for the Wednesday night preaching approached, a mob assembled in front of the chapel so dangerously threatening that Shrewsbury found himself obliged not only to abandon the public service, but to remove his wife from the dwelling above to the house of her

<sup>1</sup> This formed the top story of the chapel building.



brother, Dr. King, in another part of the town. On Thursday morning he waited upon the Governor and laid before him the occurrences just narrated, claiming the protection of the law for his people and himself. The appeal was fruitless. The Governor then in office was a weak man, in ill-favour with many of the colonists, and personally prejudiced against the Methodists; he was full of evasions and excuses. A friendly clergyman, on whom Shrewsbury called, advised the temporary closing of the chapel with a view to giving the agitation time to subside, and rallying the forces of law and order. Reluctantly he consented to this, directing his people to attend the parish church on Sunday the 19th. Meanwhile, plans were laid for the demolition of the chapel premises. A circular appeared in the course of the week announcing the formation of a Secret Committee of Public Safety, and inviting the parties addressed to repair to a certain rendezvous, where consultation would be held and instructions given to those willing to assist. There was a ready response to the summons, and the necessary measures were promptly and quietly taken. 'Accordingly'—to quote Shrewsbury's report—

On Sunday evening by six o'clock the wreckers began to muster, bringing with them carpenters, masons, &c., furnished with hammers, saws, hatchets, crowbars, and every other necessary implement. Before seven they burst open the church gate and the chapel doors and fell to work, till they had demolished lamps, benches, pews, and pulpit, and left nothing standing but the bare walls. They went next upstairs to the dwelling-house; broke open the windows and doors; threw out the crockery-ware; chopped up tables, chairs, and every article of furniture; tore up the library, consisting of more than three hundred volumes, beside some manuscripts of great importance to me; and began to unroof the house, which, when they had partly done, they made flags of such linen as they found, and gave three cheers! Then they proceeded to demolish the roof and break down the walls, as far as the dwelling-house floor. From 150 to 200 men were employed in this iniquitous work, from seven o'clock in the evening till after one o'clock in the morning—it being full moon that day—besides an immense crowd of spectators, without the least attempt being made to check the rioters either by the civil or military authorities. . . . On Monday evening the mob fell to work again, and completely levelled the very walls, so that one stone was not left upon another. The inhabitants say they will serve every chapel so that shall be built in Bridgetown; they will have no Methodist parson living amongst them!

Shrewsbury was not an eye-witness of the scenes described;

his information was derived from a careful and interested spectator ; he and his wife were spending Sunday evening at her brother's house. It was given out that Shrewsbury's death had been decreed ; as soon as they had pulled down the preaching-place, the rioters meant to hunt out and finish off *the preacher* ! They would certainly make for Dr. King's residence. Shrewsbury did not wish to have his blood upon the people's head. He allowed himself to be disguised, and hidden at some distance from the town ; his wife was taken to another place of refuge. In the afternoon of Monday they embarked secretly, two miles away from Bridgetown, on a small vessel chartered to convey them to St. Vincent. Shrewsbury would fain have stood his ground, but he writes :

Every one was afraid to give me shelter. I considered, ' If I remain, I cannot preach ; my public usefulness here is at end for the present. I shall certainly lose my life or receive some injury the effects of which will be felt for life. If I stay till Thursday and answer the unjust summons of the magistrate, the mob will tear me out of his hands and kill me on the spot. Besides whatever risk I run, it does not seem a just thing to expose my friends to danger for affording me shelter.

It is noticeable that all those implicated in the criminal work of October 19 and 20 were Whites, with the exception of a single man of colour, educated in England, who affected their company—he was afterwards excommunicated by his coloured brethren.

The Bridgetown mob were now masters of the situation. The leaders declared their resolve to ' close the Methodist concern altogether,' pointing in a triumphant manifesto to ' the total destruction of the chapel ' in proof of this, and reporting the Missionary as having fled to escape his merited chastisement. ' All true lovers of religion ' are called upon to ' follow the example of the Barbadians in putting an end to Methodism throughout the West Indies.'<sup>1</sup> The Governor, Sir Henry Warde, issued a half-hearted proclamation promising a reward of £100 to any one giving such information as should lead to the conviction of the rioters of Sunday night, which was met by a counter-proclamation of the Secret Committee

<sup>1</sup> The Committee of Public Safety sent deputations to Tobago, Trinidad, and Grenada inciting the colonists there to the above effect ; but the authorities in each of these islands suppressed their action. The St. Vincent gentry showed the Shrewsburies much kindness.

threatening 'suitable punishment' to the traitor who should turn informant. This audacious document stated that 'the majority' of the chapel-wreckers 'were of the first respectability, and were supported by the concurrence of the white community'; it concluded by announcing a 'fixed determination to put an end to Methodism within the island' and 'warning all Methodist Preachers' that they would 'approach its shores at their peril.' The Governor laid this defiance before his Council and asked what he should do. 'Nothing at all,' the Council answered; and nothing was done—the law-breakers held the field. The reports of this affair caused no little stir in England, which for some time was chiefly confined to the newspapers and the platform of Mission and anti-slavery meetings, but in the end reached official and Parliamentary circles. The outrage revealed the prevailing temper of the slave-holding community; it served to drive another nail into the coffin of slavery.

From St. Vincent Shrewsbury addressed an admirable pastoral letter to his abandoned flock, who wrote letters full of affection and steadfastness in reply. They were suffering a relentless persecution, restrained only by fear of the British Government. The women Leaders of the Society proved heroines at this crisis. Mrs. Ann Gill, a coloured widow lady of property and position in the town, along with her sister-in-law, Miss Christina Gill, was a tower of strength to the Society; she gathered the members in her house, or met them by twos and threes in other places. The magistrates forbade public Methodist services of every kind; the residences of prominent Methodists were watched to see this order obeyed. The mob threatened to pull down Mrs. Gill's house, like the chapel, 200 of them at one time surrounding it with furious cries. Brought before the police court and required to give up her work of evangelization, she made the old reply: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' She sends word to Mr. Shrewsbury, under date November 11:

The members of Society are driven closer to one another than ever. . . . We cannot meet at present, from the fierceness of the persecution, as we wish; but we do so as well as we can. . . . The enemies of the Lord are mad against me; but the Lord has given me grace and faith according to my day.

On December 30 she writes again:

Could we but have a public prayer-meeting once a fortnight, I should rejoice in the Lord. . . . The lion is a little at ease just now, but quite on the watch. My family prayed and sang together on Christmas morning, and it so alarmed him that his emissaries were quickly on the alert to know if it was a public prayer-meeting ! Glory be to God, I am a stranger to fear !

Other Methodist homes were beset and disturbed ; the house of Mrs. Humpleby, a Church lady but an outspoken and liberal friend of Methodism, was fired into ; on November 5, hers was included amongst five figures hung and burnt in effigy, two others being labelled ' Wilberforce ' and ' Shrewsbury ' !<sup>1</sup> Mary Roach, an aged black Class-leader, and Mr. Shrewsbury's former servant in Bridgetown, was pursued with special malignity. But, she writes, ' blessed be Almighty God, not a hair of my head has been hurt ! ' Appreciating her master's tastes, Mary tells him how she had snatched a Hebrew Bible and a few other treasured books from the hands of the pillagers. The spirit of the Bridgetown Methodists under their calamities was expressed by one of the simplest amongst them, who, when tauntingly asked, ' What will you do for a church now ? ' replied : ' You pulled down the chapel, but my church is in my heart, and you can't get easily at that ! ' The injured people issued a printed ' Appeal of the Wesleyan Methodists of this Island to the Public,' rebutting in terms of quiet expostulation the false charges against them.

The St. Vincent Governor required testimonials to Shrewsbury's character before allowing him to preach on this island. Moses Rayner, therefore, now the St. Vincent Superintendent, early in November sailed to Barbados, where he was well known, to secure the necessary credentials. While off the shore he received a letter from the Public Safety Committee, which had usurped the functions of Government, notifying him that Methodists were not allowed in the island ; he might come on shore for twenty-four hours and no longer, in order to make the inquiries he desired, during which time his movements would be strictly watched. The Governor and magistrates declined responsibility for his safety. He must have failed of his purpose had not a trio of midshipmen belonging to a vessel of the Royal Navy then in Carlisle Bay, hearing

<sup>1</sup> The ringleaders in the riot were particularly afraid of the evidence Mrs. Humpleby might produce against them.



of the Missionary's plight, gallantly undertaken the business for him. They obtained the necessary affidavits, and Rayner was able to clear his brother's character in St. Vincent.<sup>1</sup> One of these youthful officers called on Mr. Shrewsbury in England many years later, when it transpired that all three had been 'savingly converted to God' and had 'risen to promotion and eminence in their profession'; 'receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet, they received a prophet's reward.'

Letters of sympathy and approval from the London Mission House reached Shrewsbury at St. Vincent, assuring him that 'the Committee are not to be intimidated by a lawless rabble and driven from the ground which God has called them to work upon.' He is at liberty to come to England if he thinks best; but the Committee suggest his returning to the charge of the Grenada Mission, while Woolley and Goy attempt to resume the work in Barbados. Samuel Woolley, who was the District Chairman, at the beginning of 1824 fell seriously ill; and Goy found landing in Barbados quite impracticable. Shrewsbury took up his appointment in Grenada; but in a few weeks his ministry terminated there, from a singular cause. He was visiting an estate in the course of his duties, the manager of which, on meeting him, broke out into a fierce invective against John Smith, the lately martyred Missionary of the London Society in Demerara. Being personally acquainted with Smith, Shrewsbury warmly defended his vilified friend. His remonstrance so aggravated the manager and the proprietor of the plantation that they forbade his further visits, and set about securing his exclusion from other properties. As this hostility would greatly limit Shrewsbury's usefulness in Grenada, his brethren decided that it was best for him to withdraw from the islands for the present. Goy returned to Grenada, while the Shrewsburys sailed for England in May, 1824. Thus William Shrewsbury's work in the West Indies came to a close. He had fought a good fight; others were to reap the victory.

In Barbados that victory was not yet in sight. Throughout 1824 the Anti-Methodists remained in power, presenting as strong and threatening a front as ever. Moses Rayner, who was stationed there by the Conference of this year, wrote in

<sup>1</sup> The depositions thus procured were made good use of by Brougham in his speech on Shrewsbury's case before the House of Commons.

September declaring his readiness to come ; but his friends warned him the attempt was useless. Shortly before the anniversary of the destruction of the chapel a notice proceeding from the ' Committee of Public Safety ' was posted up in Bridgetown to the effect that the Committee were resolved on ' rooting eternally from their shores the damned doctrine now again rearing its pestilential head. . . . We will,' the notice concludes, ' with fire and sword root out and destroy all and every the abettors of Methodism and Methodists. So help us, our God ! ' This fulmination was aimed in chief at Mrs. Ann Gill, whose house was to be razed in commemoration of the victory of the year before. The intrepid widow appealed to the Governor for protection, which this time was granted ; the magistrates were assembled, and the military put under arms to overawe the rioters, who had to be content with burning her in effigy ! The general situation remained unchanged. The year 1825 came in finding the Barbados Methodists without a sanctuary or a Minister. Writing to Mr. Shrewsbury, now in England, on March 3, Mrs. Gill reports a clear increase in the Society of fourteen members since the destruction of the chapel, adding, ' We are as cautious of admitting new members as you used to be.'

Mrs. Gill was then expecting the early arrival of Mr. Rayner, who had been directed by the St. Vincent Synod to take up his station at Barbados with the least possible delay. The West Indian Governors had received imperative instructions from the Colonial Secretary to safeguard all law-abiding Missionaries. In the course of April Rayner sailed for Bridgetown, but on reaching Carlisle Bay he was warned not to land, under penalty of death, and power lay behind this threat. The Committee of Public Safety addressed a manifesto in its truculent style ' to all true lovers of their country,' informing them of the Missionary's approach and bidding the inhabitants ' assemble to hurl the thunder of their excited fury at the daring miscreant's head ! ' The House of Assembly urged the Governor in the interests of ' public tranquillity ' to prevent the expected invasion, quoting to this effect a local statute against Dissenting Preachers, which dated from the time of Charles II. Their Address dwelt on ' the firm attachment of the people of this island to the present happy establishment in Church and State,' and on the recent appointment of a Bishop of Barbados.

and 'the numerous additions made to the Ministers of the true Church of England, fully sufficient for the religious instruction of all classes in the island,' as reasons against the admission of Methodist Preachers. This affected zeal for religion was discounted by the notorious facts that the root of the antipathy toward the late Wesleyan Missionary lay in his pungent exposure of vice, and that he and his people had been almost alone in their care for the souls of the black population. The Governor, who, under pressure from England, adopted a courteous tone, very different from that he had used toward Shrewsbury, informed Rayner that the magistrates 'have strict and positive instructions to protect him' on landing in all his legal (lawful) proceedings, but adding: 'The violent excitement and angry feelings of the people of this island are such as to make me dread the consequences which may ensue.' It was evident to Rayner, that, as things were in Bridgetown, he could only go about his work under a military escort; he therefore declined to land, and shortly afterwards took the opportunity of re-visiting England. His action was approved by his brethren, both in the colonies and at home. The Methodists of the island generally deprecated the Missionary's coming just then; Mrs. Gill held a contrary opinion. 'I don't advise you to come,' she writes; 'but I say, if it was *me* I should come.' In May this lady was subjected to a course of prosecution instituted by the House of Assembly, on the charge of holding 'illegal meetings,' which involved her in great trouble and expense. The Missionary Committee sent her a letter of thanks for her unflinching services to the Church, informing her also of the instructions given by the Colonial Office for the protection of the injured Methodists, and promising that a Missionary would be landed in Barbados as soon as ever the way was open.

British justice may be slow-footed, but at last it overtakes the law-breaker, in whatever corner of the Empire he is found. On June 23, 1825, the judgement of the House of Commons was brought to bear upon the Bridgetown doings, upon the motion of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, leader of the anti-slavery movement. Papers were laid upon the table of the House relating the history of the case, and showing that not only a shameful riot and great destruction of property had taken place, but that the perpetrators

remained unpunished and continued their terrorism and defiance of the law. The discussion that followed went to prove that the outbreak in Barbados was the culmination of a long course of injustice, and was but an extreme example of the lawlessness and contempt for human rights engendered by West Indian slavery. The debate was distinguished by powerful deliverances on the part of Henry Brougham, then at the height of his political influence, and George Canning, as well as Fowell Buxton. Joseph Butterworth, the Methodist Member of Parliament and Treasurer of the Missionary Society, stated the policy of the latter body and cleared its Missionaries from the reproach of intermeddling with civil affairs and stirring up disaffection amongst the slaves. On the motion of Canning, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the House resolved *nemine contradicente* :

That an humble address be presented to His Majesty, to represent to His Majesty that this House, having taken into their most serious consideration the papers laid before them relating to the demolition of the Methodist Chapel in Barbados, deem it their duty to declare that they view with the utmost indignation that scandalous and daring violation of the law, and having seen, with great satisfaction, the instructions which have been sent out by His Majesty's Secretary of State to the Governor of Barbados, to prevent a recurrence of similar outrages, they humbly assure His Majesty of their readiness to concur in every measure which His Majesty may deem necessary for securing ample protection and religious toleration to all His Majesty's subjects in that part of His Majesty's dominions.

Secretary Canning in the course of his speech affirmed his opinion that 'in the conduct of Mr. Shrewsbury there did not appear the slightest ground for blame or suspicion'—a statement received with cheers from both sides of the House. Fowell Buxton accepted Canning's amendment on his original resolution; 'for,' said he, 'it leaves me all I care for, the declaration of the Commons of England that we will have religious toleration in the West Indies.' The proviso that the demolished chapel should be rebuilt 'at the expense of the Colony of Barbados,' was not pressed; this act of restitution was left to the conscience and good feeling of the colony—which unhappily were lacking.

The malignants of Bridgetown saw that their game was up. They had roused the British Lion, and his anger was not to be



brookd. The Wesleyan Conference of 1825 resolved that the Barbados Mission should be immediately reopened. In the letter expressing their sympathy with Mrs. Gill under the persecution she had suffered, the Missionary Committee offered to meet the legal expenses incurred by her in defence of Methodist liberties. She replied at length, saying that her costs were less than was perhaps supposed, and had been hitherto defrayed through the generosity of friends in Barbados. She was able to defend herself at Quarter Sessions without employing a barrister. 'The Resolutions of Parliament,' she assured the Committee, had already 'abated the threats' of her 'poor countrymen.' She expected a great ingathering of souls so soon as the Mission was re-established, for there were many inquirers. If they had the privilege of prayer-meetings they would abundantly prosper. It grieved her to see 'the site of the chapel fast becoming a dung-hill.' She was glad to learn that a Missionary was appointed, and willing to come. On Christmas Eve she writes once more to say that her case has at last been settled in the Barbados court. In the final issue 'there was not a tongue to condemn me! . . . The people at length begin to see their folly and desire to retrieve their lost character.' Prayer-meetings were resumed without interference from the magistrates. The Society continued to worship at the Bridgetown parish church, its members partaking there of the Lord's Supper.

Rayner returned to the West Indies early in 1826. In February of that year he landed safely in Barbados with his family, to the great joy of the faithful Methodist flock. A warning was placarded that the Missionary would be tarred and feathered, and the gentleman who gave him hospitality on his arrival was angrily threatened; but no actual violence was used. Rayner gave notice of the intention to rebuild the chapel, and applied for the licensing meanwhile of Mrs. Gill's house as a place of public worship; the licence was refused on the ground of the Conventicle Act of the reign of Charles II under which Mrs. Gill had been prosecuted. That prosecution had been dropped; and there was reason to believe that any hostile action taken under the colonial statute of Charles the Second's reign would prove invalid, since the latter had been annulled by the British Toleration Act of 1812. Rayner therefore recommenced preaching, and carried on the usual round of Methodist

services. Though some public excitement was manifested and Methodism was attacked in the newspapers, the magistrates did not interfere ; licence or no licence, the authorities durst not forbid Dissenting worship in face of the recent declaration of the House of Commons.

Rayner received invitations to preach in the country, and found the need of a horse for inland journeys. A proprietor of the name of William Reece built for the Negroes on his two estates a substantial Methodist chapel holding a congregation of 400. This gentleman proved a life-long promoter of the Mission, and left property for its maintenance after his death. The Methodist cause was now fairly re-established. Rayner found the Society reduced to 76 members, 52 of whom were free black or coloured folk ; only 6 Whites remained. But the tide had turned, and Barbados Methodism was now in smooth waters. The interruptions to public worship, formerly so common, were not renewed. Before the end of 1825 a subscription list was opened in England toward the rebuilding of the Bridgetown chapel, and Rayner began to prepare for this urgently necessary work. He did not think that Barbados would yield more than £200 for this purpose, and the new chapel would cost above ten times this amount. No compensation could be extracted from the colonial exchequer. Moses Rayner, the builder of the former sanctuary, was now to rear the new house of prayer.

At the beginning of 1827 the Committee sent a colleague to Rayner's help in the person of John Stephenson, who had laboured amongst the Windward Isles four years, a man ' of vigorous understanding,' with a ' character marked by force and manliness,' well qualified for the task before him. Stephenson was received on landing with politeness by the island officials and without molestation from the populace—a signal change in Barbadian behaviour ; ' the Committee of Public Safety ' had disappeared. He found Mrs. Gill's preaching-room, though greatly enlarged since its opening, excessively overcrowded. The new chapel, he said, should be built to contain 1,000 people, doubling the size of the old one. The British regiment now stationed on the island brought a welcome reinforcement, having ten Methodist members of Society in its ranks. Regular preaching was forthwith commenced at the barracks. By the end of this year Mr. Stephenson was

compelled to return to his native land, where he laboured in the ministry very usefully for forty years; like John Raby, he was transferred from the West Indies to the Shetland Islands.<sup>1</sup> The studious and estimable John Briddon replaced Stephenson as Rayner's colleague; in his two years at Barbados he did much to build up the restored Church.

Mrs. Gill had some time ago offered, on advantageous terms,\* the site of her house in James Street for the projected chapel; ample space and a commanding position was secured by building here. The foundation stone was laid, with due ceremony, on May 14, 1828; a year later the chapel was opened for Divine worship. The munificent sum of £2,000 was contributed toward the erection by friends of the Society at home; the remainder of the cost the Barbados Methodists were able to bear. The new building was smaller than many would have wished to make it—in a few years it proved too strait; but it was considerably larger (seating nearly 600 hearers) than its predecessor, and far superior in style and situation and convenience. A good Preacher's house stood by its side. The James Street chapel—rebuilt subsequently on a more extensive scale—has remained ever since the headquarters of Methodism in Barbados. The ground on which it stands is hallowed by the memory of that brave saint of God, Mistress Ann Gill.

Moses Rayner showed himself, if possible, even more assiduous and variously able in this second piece of church building than in the case of the first. Some observer on the island sent home a complaint, which reached Hatton Garden, that the Superintendent at this time was preaching seldomer than he ought. The censure was conveyed to him by one of the Secretaries, who hinted that he was 'losing his character'! Stung to the quick, Rayner replied by a touching and effective *apologia*. Like St. Paul, he 'speaks as a fool,' graphically describing his labours and anxieties. He has draughted the design of the chapel, to begin with; he has acted as his own clerk-of-the-works to save expense; he has mounted the scaffolding day after day to make sure that the walls were rising

<sup>1</sup> John Stephenson was the father of Dr. T. Bowman Stephenson, founder of the National Children's Home.

\* The property had cost her £1,700. She agreed to take the site of the former chapel in lieu of £700 of this sum, and to let the payment of the residue stand over, without interest, until her youthful son should reach his twenty-first year.

true ; the smallest details of the work have passed under his eye at every stage. And now, when ' the headstone ' is about to be ' brought forth with shoutings,' to find himself regarded as a delinquent for the devotion of time and strength to this absorbing duty is more than he can silently bear. The letter affords a valuable insight into the character of one of the men of finest spirit belonging to that period.

Two years later a second church was opened at The Bay, a seaside suburb of Bridgetown. A second country chapel, in addition to that built by Mr. Reece, was provided by another proprietor for the workers on his estate. Beside these, two regular preaching-places were opened in the country. The Mission was growing into a Circuit ; by the year 1830 the Church membership, still small in proportion to the congregations, had risen to 129 ; of these two-thirds were free black or coloured people. From this date the Society advanced continuously. Rayner in 1829 gave place to Jonathan Edmondson, one of the most judicious and competent of the younger Missionaries in the field, whose work in Demerara had earned for him a good degree, while the second Preacher, Briddon, was followed in 1830 by James Rathbone. Staying four years in Barbados, Rathbone laboured in this District ten years (1825-35) ; he was amongst the many who lost health in the West Indies to recover it at home, and to serve worthily and long in the English work.

The hurricane which devastated St. Vincent in 1831 swept over Barbados with almost equal fury. The dense population and highly cultivated condition of the island made the tornado disastrous to property and life ; but the well-built chapels escaped destruction, and the work of God was little hindered by the calamity. Joseph Fletcher superintended the Circuit for one year (1832-33) ; then Rathbone took over the principal charge, which he held at the date of Emancipation, assisted by Edward Grieves. The Circuit membership now figured 383, above two-thirds of these being free people. In three years the Society had trebled its numbers. A joyous reaping issued from the seed sown by Shrewsbury and his handful of fellow workers in tears and tribulation.

The Mission to TRINIDAD was commenced in 1809, while Dr. Coke was still the director of missionary affairs ; he took a



warm interest in its promotion, though he never visited this large and important island. In consequence of the previous Spanish-French colonization of Trinidad and the preoccupation of the island by Romanism, Methodist work has always been difficult and struggling here. The French of the plantation Negroes forms a language-barrier hard to surmount. But this fertile country was very partially inhabited, and its resources were undeveloped when the English Government took possession. A stream of fresh colonists, coming mainly from the smaller and poorer islands, and accompanied previously to 1834 by their negro slaves, flowed into Trinidad; after Emancipation many free Blacks immigrated thither also. The Mission found amongst the new-comers, some of them already acquainted with Methodism, most of its converts and adherents.

The pioneer of this enterprise was Thomas Talboys. This remarkable man had been in his youth a soldier in the West Indies, where he was awakened to religion under Methodist preaching, and vainly sought peace through the Roman confessional. Returning to England on his discharge from the Army, he found the Divine treasure under the ministry which first touched his soul. At the age of thirty-five he offered himself for the service of the Gospel, and was enlisted to wage a new warfare in the country where he had served under the British flag. After a year's work in St. Vincent and Grenada he visited a few friends he had made in Trinidad during his soldiering days. He found there a handful of scattered Methodists from other islands, whom he drew together. Religious provision for other than Romanists was lacking in this island; a famine of the word of God prevailed. Talboys took every opportunity of preaching; many doors were open, and the people flocked to hear him; the English Governor approved his ministry. His soldierly bearing and pleasant manners commended him, and he appears to have been a striking Preacher. Talboys reported his success, and asked permission to stay and carry farther the experiment. Dr. Coke consented; and he settled down to a regular missionary campaign, making Port of Spain, the British capital, his residence. By the end of the first year a small chapel had been built for his use.

Dangerous opposition now arose. On the one hand, the

Roman priests took alarm and denounced the importer of heresy ; on the other hand, the practisers and patrons of the prevalent immorality were disturbed by the fearless denouncer of sin, and resolved to silence him. Some of the magistrates signed an order for drafting the Methodist Preacher into the local militia, refusing to admit his exemption as a licensed Minister. For a while he escaped by hiding in a faithful friend's house, but was discovered and thrown into prison until his case was examined by the Governor, who set him free. At this early date the Anglican Church was feebly represented in Trinidad. Talboys found a single Independent Minister at work there, with a little Church around him that formed an oasis in the spiritual desert. The two servants of Christ joined their forces. In deference to the Roman Catholics, the Government imposed hampering restrictions upon Talboys' ministrations ; he was allowed to baptize and to bury only outside the boundaries of Port of Spain. Appointments in the country plantations multiplied greatly during the latter part of his pastorate ; *three* Missionaries, he wrote, would not be too many for the work in prospect. Prejudice against Methodism was, he believed, dying out. When his term closed in 1812 he reported a Church membership of 138, only two of these being Whites.

Talboys' forecast respecting Trinidad proved too sanguine. His work was continued by the devoted and amiable John Dace, who saw the Society increased in the two years (1812-14) by more than a half, despite incessant and vexatious opposition. 'Our congregations,' he reports, 'are large, serious, and attentive ; our people truly alive to God. The work has taken deep root.' Against Dace's successors, Thomas Blackburn and George Poole, hostility rose high. The repeated change of Ministers required by itinerant rule excited the suspicion of the authorities. The energetic Governor, Sir Ralph Woodford, recently installed in office, whose administration was in many respects admirable and greatly furthered the economic development of the colony, treated the Methodists as obnoxious 'sectarians.' Loyal Englishmen, he thought, should abide by the State Church.<sup>1</sup> Like other Trinidad Governors, he was

<sup>1</sup> Blackburn on his arrival obtained by persistence an interview with Governor Woodford, who gave him the following instructions : 'You must only preach up moral duties and teach the people not to thieve and tell lies. . . . You must not speak at all about the mysteries of religion. . . . The people can learn

anxious to conciliate the Roman priests, who had great influence in the island, and who saw in the Methodist Preacher a formidable enemy. Under pressure from this quarter the Trinidad Government framed a document for signature by all Protestant Ministers and teachers, binding them to abstain from inculcating any doctrine contrary to the Roman faith and from using expressions derogatory to the Catholic Church. With such a demand no Methodist Preacher could comply; the Anglican Rector appears to have made no scruple about it. The Port of Spain Chapel was therefore closed by order of the Governor; preaching was stopped and the work of the Mission arrested. The interruption was the more deplorable as, according to Blackburn's testimony, 'the thirst for knowledge' amongst the frequenters of the chapel was amazing. 'New members,' he reports in November, 1814, 'are added every week; scarcely a meeting' passes 'without an inquirer.' Poole, who remained on Blackburn's withdrawal, kept the Church together by private visitation and care of the Society-classes. After some delay the Missionary Committee appealed to the Crown against the action of the Trinidad Government, with complete success. The King in Council condemned the declaration required from Protestant Ministers, and sent instructions forbidding interference with religious teaching, unless this should be contrary to civil order and obedience. So the British Throne again proved itself the shield of religious liberty in the West Indies. The Port of Spain chapel was reopened within a year of its closing, to the delight of the people who found in it a spiritual home.

Abraham Whitehouse succeeded in 1816 to this difficult charge. His best skill was needed to steer the Methodist bark through the troubled waters of Trinidad society. Persecution had increased the popularity of the Mission, and Whitehouse was able to report a continuous growth in the Church membership during his incumbency. But the local Government, sore at the censure passed upon it, was as unfriendly as it dared to be, and kept the Mission under various annoying and hampering restrictions. The Roman clergy were vigilantly hostile, and

them in the Established Church. You must only preach what is contained in the New Testament.' This clever man's ideas about religion and the New Testament were childishly vague. Blackburn was forbidden (1) to allude to the tenets in which the Churches differed; (2) to administer the Sacraments and conduct marriages and funerals (this was to infringe on the prerogatives of the clergy); (3) to hold service of any kind oftener than thrice a week, including Sundays, and to prolong the Sunday evening service beyond 8 p.m.

some of them far from scrupulous. The Blacks of the island were hard to reach ; they were debased even below the common level of West Indian Negrodom. The Methodist Circuit was brought to the verge of bankruptcy ; its burden of debt had been aggravated by the closing of the Port of Spain Chapel, entailing the loss of its income, and by the costly repairs necessary on its reopening. The Home Committee relieved this distress by a special grant of money, and some liberal friends were found in the island. Through Whitehouse's excellent management the Church was extricated from an almost desperate position. For lack of a horse, and because of the constant attention required by the town Society and chapel, he was obliged to neglect the country stations, which were scattered far apart in this extensive island. A second Missionary was indispensable for working the Circuit. The fine spirit and hearty affection of the little Church, and the eagerness of the congregation which crowded the small and mean town chapel, made amends for the peculiar discomforts of the climate and for the ceaseless covert persecution the Missionary suffered.

In 1817, when the Society numbered 276 (including 9 Whites), the limitations formerly imposed on Dissenting Ministers were reinforced with inquisitorial strictness, upon the pretext supplied by the Barbados insurrection of the previous year. Whitehouse was told that he might not administer the Sacraments, nor bury the dead, nor preach more than three times in the week ; and that all services must close by eight o'clock in the evening. Prayer-meetings were dispersed ; ' morning lectures,' which Whitehouse appears to have delivered in lieu of the forbidden week-day sermons, were stopped. ' The consequences of this interference,' he writes to the Committee, ' were fatal to personal holiness in a greater degree than it is possible for you to conceive.' While sending, through Hatton Garden, a renewed appeal to the British Crown on the subject, he has come to the determination to disregard the above restrictions ; in fidelity to the Gospel he dare not submit ; his flock are in danger of ' merging into a state of formality and apostasy.' I have weighed the matter well before the Lord,' he says, ' and am convinced that I can in conscience no longer refrain from a full and complete exercise of my ministry. To keep back the Ordinances is to famish instead of feed the Church of God.' The course he is taking may expose him



to suspension and even punishment before an answer arrives from the Prince Regent ; such is the influence of Popery, the malice of the Rector (of the Port of Spain), and the enmity of the Governor to the Methodist religion. We cannot teach Methodist doctrine without trenching on the peculiar tenets of Roman Catholicism.

The petty ill-will of the Governor was shown by his holding up a box of Methodist books consigned to the Missionary, which he denounced as 'enthusiastical stuff !'<sup>1</sup> During Whitehouse's absence at Synod the chapel was closed by the Governor's orders. Local Preachers were anathema to him<sup>2</sup>; and when, during this interdiction, a party of Missionaries touched at Port of Spain *en route* for Jamaica, the use of the Methodist chapel was forbidden them, and they were able to preach only through the hospitality of the Congregationalists.

In May, 1818, Whitehouse was summoned before the Council and required to give his bond to the amount of £500, with two additional securities, in promise to observe the limitations stated above. Under the new form of interdict, the Missionary was required to abstain from *marrying* as well as burying, and the Anglican was coupled with the Roman Church in the veto upon doctrinal controversy.

Whitehouse flatly refused compliance, taking his stand on the Toleration Act, on his previous licence to preach in the colonies, and on the ground of his ordination vows, which he would renounce by submitting to the stipulations of the Council. He was dismissed as incorrigible ; next day orders were issued closing the chapel and inhibiting the Minister from all public religious offices until he should conform. Being thus disabled, and deprived of livelihood through the shutting up of the chapel, Whitehouse resolved to go to England and urge there the case for the rescission of the illegal measures of the Trinidad Government and the vindication of religious liberty. The Trinidad persecutors were actuated by motives somewhat different from those prevailing in Jamaica and Barbados, and resorted to different means ; but they sought the same end, and their intolerance had to be curbed in the same fashion by the justice of the British Crown and the assertion of those principles of freedom and toleration in which the Empire was built—

<sup>1</sup> Sir Ralph Woodford inspected all importations into his province, and claimed to act as literary censor.

<sup>2</sup> Whitehouse urged this inhibition as a special reason for the appointment of a second Minister, notwithstanding the poverty of the Circuit.

principles under which Rome sheltered herself where she was weak, but which she utterly scouted where she was strong.

The attempt to starve Methodism to death in Trinidad by a famine of the Word of God went far toward success. A Methodist lady of the island, returning from a visit to England during this crisis, describes the Society as 'in a most deplorable state—without a pastor, and with every appearance of distress. . . . We labour,' she reports, 'under a debt of £300 sterling, which becomes more trying from the want of a public ministry.' No means of grace was left to the Church except the Class-meeting; while that lived, however, Methodism was not dead. The Missionary of the London Society remained; but he was silenced, refusing submission to the degrading conditions imposed by the Government. A little later (May 17, 1819) a loyal Methodist layman writes to Mr. Shrewsbury from Trinidad: 'Our way appears hedged up, and my faith is entirely gone in regard to help from England; letters addressed to the Mission House are unanswered.'<sup>1</sup> 'With regard to myself,' this gentleman continues, 'I cannot bear the burden any longer. The Society has dropped into nothing. A few women meet irregularly; the men are scattered.' In sending on this communication to Hatton Garden, Shrewsbury gives his opinion that it is 'touch and go' with the Trinidad Mission; and that 'if the Committee wish to save the result of eleven years' work in the island, they must act promptly and generously.'

After much delay<sup>2</sup> the second attempt of the Trinidad Government to muzzle Dissenting Missionaries was overruled by the British Government, and at the beginning of 1820 the way was open to resume the Mission. The situation remained extremely difficult; this post was recognized as the most trying in the St. Vincent District. When Shrewsbury and Goy visited the island from Grenada to reconnoitre, after Whitehouse's withdrawal, they had reported that for Trinidad 'a preacher of great prudence and wisdom' was needed, 'as well as a man of no ordinary piety'; they suggested Samuel Woolley as the fittest Missionary then at work in the West Indies. Accordingly Woolley, the Chairman of the District,

<sup>1</sup> Probably the Secretaries were unacquainted with the names and positions of the senders of these letters, and did not know what authority they carried.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Ralph Woodford was a valuable servant, with whom the Colonial Office was reluctant to quarrel, and no doubt he made very plausible representations in self-defence.

was appointed, and arrived in the course of the year 1820. In June, 1821, on full acquaintance with the Circuit, he writes to the Committee :

I sit down to give you some account of this long-beclouded Mission. To collect and revive a scattered and dead people is a most arduous and painful task. I have often been ready to relinquish the effort. But a beam of hope has arisen to gild my path. . . . Although the Society is still small, the members generally are becoming more deeply acquainted with the things of God ; from . . . the success which attends the ministry of the word, I am led to hope that this little hill of Zion will yet blossom abundantly.

For several years, in the absence of a pastor, the Trinidad Church membership had been entered at the figure last returned by Whitehouse, viz. 248 ; Woolley could only find 109 on visiting the Classes. Slowly the Church began to grow again ; not till 1828 did it approach the level of ten years before, numbering now 236, of whom half were slaves. Then came another ebb, during the unsettled years preceding Emancipation, reducing the membership in 1833 to 147.

Through Woolley's tactful management, the relations between the Mission and the civil authorities became tolerable. The Governor received the new Missionary cordially, frankly accepting the removal of the restrictions on which he had so pertinaciously insisted. New doors were opened to the estates in the interior, and Woolley reported ' a great number of disbanded African soldiers ' settled in the east of the island, to whom access was possible. At the end of 1821 he writes in a sanguine, hopeful strain :

I have now openings sufficient to employ *two* more Missionaries. I am aware all cannot be granted at once ; but I must have *one* additional or all will fall to the ground.

A helper was sent him in 1823 ; next year the strenuous John Stephenson became the second Preacher ; but the Superintendent's uncertain health weakened the staff, and the country work remained undeveloped. Woolley occupied the Trinidad station for the unusual period of seven years—a time broken, however, by repeated and protracted sicknesses, and by a visit to England he made in 1823.

Before leaving the island he accomplished the building of a substantial chapel, on which he had set his heart from his

first arrival. The old place was a structure of mud and thatch, mean in appearance, small in accommodation, and constantly needing repairs. Woolley had painful experience of the troubles of West Indian chapel building, which now stood him in good stead. He laid his plans carefully and proceeded deliberately. The new church was completed at last in November, 1827. The building occupied one of the finest positions in Port of Spain and was a credit to the town. Before its opening the application for seats exceeded the number disposable. The result of this great effort was, however, disappointing. Woolley was followed in the superintendency by good men—Payne, Fidler, Fletcher, John Wood, succeeding in turn up to the year 1833—but the Church continued to droop. The second Missionary was withdrawn, his appointment proving unfruitful, and the country stations suffered. So early as 1824 Woolley laments that land offered for chapels and mission-houses in the interior has to be declined for want of workers; Methodist settlers in Trinidad from other places, scattered over the island as they were, fell away because they could not be looked after. The second Preacher should have been domiciled in the country; for various reasons this step was not taken, and the Mission consequently failed to expand. The African soldier colonists, quartered about Manzanilla, on the east side of the island, whom Woolley had intended to visit years before, were found by Fletcher in 1832 relapsing into heathenism for lack of oversight. He describes the island at that time as fallen into a distracted condition. While the ferment over the approaching Emancipation proved unfavourable to religion throughout the West Indies, in Trinidad the agitation was particularly marked; 'civil matters,' Fletcher writes, 'between the Governor<sup>1</sup> and the people are in an uncivil and unpleasant state.' The long-sustained commercial prosperity of Trinidad underwent severe relapse.

The poverty of the people, and the many failures in business, provoked much discontent, both toward the higher powers of this world and the Highest above!

Outside of Port of Spain, he declares, 'there is not a single Protestant religious teacher from one end of the island to the other—no, not a catechist.' It was lamentable indeed that

<sup>1</sup> The last years of the prolonged and hitherto successful rule of this masterful man were clouded by misfortune. He died in Trinidad not long after this date.



the Methodist Mission had not remedied this crying want. Fletcher traces the failure to 'the tyrannical measures of Sir Ralph Woodford' in the years preceding 1820. The course of the Gospel was thrown back and the access of the Missionaries to the Trinidad Negroes delayed for many a year to come by this arrest. A blight had come upon the Methodism of the island in its spring-time.

The first Methodist Preacher to visit TOBAGO and attempt evangelism there was William Turton; he landed in 1795. The son of a Barbados planter, he was a volunteer of the Mission and held the status of a Local Preacher. Circumstances had made him acquainted with the condition of the people of Tobago, who had no religious ordinances or teaching of any kind beyond that supplied by the efforts—far from successful—of a single Moravian Missionary.<sup>1</sup> Turton reported to Dr. Coke, who had encouraged the venture, his beginning to preach and his hopes of forming a Society. He had been but a few months on the island when a French force took temporary possession, committing great ravages. The hardship and exposure Turton suffered during this invasion brought on him prostrating sickness, compelling abandonment of his task in this island. For twenty-two years after this Tobago was left untouched by Methodism. Meanwhile the London Missionary Society stationed a Missionary and built a chapel in Scarborough, the only town of Tobago<sup>2</sup>; but their cause made little headway, and after some years the chapel was closed. There were, however, several earnest Protestant laymen in the island anxious to have the Gospel preached on their shores, and a few Methodists had drifted thither from other parts of the West Indies. When John Brown and James Catts touched at Scarborough on their way to Haiti early in 1817 they were welcomed by a gentleman of the name of Cunningham, who procured for them the use of the vacant Congregational chapel. He persuaded them that Methodism might be established there, with great advantage to a people wellnigh lost to the sense of religion. During the few days of their visit the travellers formed a Society-class of six coloured people, four

<sup>1</sup> This was the Rev. T. Montgomery, father of James Montgomery, the poet. He died a few years later in Barbados. In 1798 the Moravian Mission was resumed more successfully.

<sup>2</sup> Scarborough was little more than a village, having perhaps 700 inhabitants.

of whom had been Methodist members elsewhere. In the course of that year the St. Vincent Chairman, Samuel Woolley, visited Tobago; introduced by Cunningham, he called upon a number of well-disposed men of position, one of whom, after a thorough inquiry into the nature and policy of Methodism, gave him £100 down and promised £50 yearly toward the support of a Wesleyan Missionary. Another Tobago gentleman visited Antigua to inspect Methodism there; approving of what he saw, he finally went to London and put himself in communication with the Mission House. In Tobago, quite exceptionally, the initiative toward Missionary work came from leading proprietors and men of social standing.

Next year (1818) the Synod made its first appointment to Tobago, fixing upon Jonathan Raynar.<sup>1</sup> This excellent and modest man commended himself and his message. Without actively opposing it, the Governor refused to countenance Methodist work<sup>2</sup>; on the other hand, a number of the estate-owners welcomed the Missionary and offered facilities for teaching their slaves. Raynar had the use of the London Society's chapel, which seated 200 people; this was filled immediately to overflowing. The Methodists would have taken over and repaired the building, but no trustees could be found with whom to negotiate. Liberal subscriptions were forthcoming, and the Mission promised to be self-supporting from the outset. Raynar regarded the Tobago Negroes as the most backward in the West Indies in domesticity and civilization, and in knowledge of English; they had, he imagined, less idea of natural religion than the African tribes from which they sprang! Their treatment by the Whites was above rather than below the average; cases of cruelty were comparatively rare. Losing his wife in October, at the end of the year, Raynar removed to St. Martin, where he himself died in 1819. He left in Tobago a Society of 22 strongly attached Church members, 5 of them being Whites.

Raynar's successor was John Smedley, in whose three years of service the little Society was more than doubled. On his arrival he reports 'flattering prospects of usefulness—openings on every side.' The Legislative Council was perfectly

<sup>1</sup> To be distinguished from his contemporary, *Moses Rayner*.

<sup>2</sup> The Governor of Tobago was a devout Anglican, who was vexed that the place of 'the Church' in the island should be usurped by sectarians. Provoked to jealousy, he took steps to have a church built at Scarborough.

friendly. Like his predecessor, Smedley found the Tobago Negroes 'amazingly ignorant. I am at a loss,' he says, 'to know what means to devise in order to find a way to their understandings'; many desired baptism for their children as 'a kind of charm against the incantation of hags and Obeahmen.' An assistant was supplied to aid in the country work. The promising and lovable young Missionary first appointed, William Larcom, died in November, 1820, within a year of his sailing from England. Four days after his decease Mrs. Smedley was snatched away by death; well might the bereaved man say: 'I have been called to pass through deep waters of affliction.' The vacant post remained unfilled when in August, 1822, Smedley writes to the Committee:

I know of very few places in the island to which I could not gain access, had I opportunity to extend my labours. Did you see the eagerness with which the Negroes rush from the field in the evening to receive instruction on the estates which I visit, and did you witness their amazing ignorance on those subjects which they are most concerned to know, I cannot think you would hesitate a moment to lend help.

The Committee complied, and next year Larcom's empty place was filled. John Nelson, who followed Smedley, and John Stephenson wrote a joint letter from Tobago in July, 1823, to report that they now visit eleven estates, preaching fortnightly at each of them; two chapels were soon to be built in the country. They too remark on the fathomless ignorance of the Negroes; 'the work of instruction and reformation amongst them' will require 'time and much patient labour.' Many of the proprietors were sensible of the benefit the Mission conveyed to their people, and furthered its work. Persecution was here a thing unknown. The want of roads was the chief hindrance to itinerating the island, which was thinly peopled, and in much of its extent rugged and forest-clad.

By the end of 1824 the Scarborough Methodists commenced building a chapel of their own, toward which they secured the help by subscription of 'almost every member of the House of Assembly' and 'almost every gentleman in the colony.' The Mission appeared to be in favour both with God and man. The Missionaries report a growing and exemplary Society in the town, with a 'pleasingly efficient Sunday School' and a

'large and serious congregation'; on the country estates the catechumens were beginning to profit by regular instruction. In 1825, since the appointment of the second Minister, the Society membership had increased to 74; only 11 of these were slaves. However willing, few of the black people were ripe at present for admission to the Church.

Nelson held the superintendency four years, being transferred to St. Martin in February, 1827. In leaving Tobago he testifies: 'The numerous and continued kindnesses of the colonists of all ranks in the island have filled our hearts with grateful attachment to them.' This worthy Minister received on his departure public testimonials of a kind unique in the course of our early West Indian Missions. First, the President commanding the colonial forces sent him a draft of £50 to be applied to liquidating the debt on the Scarborough chapel, 'as an acknowledgement of your and Mr. Cheeswright's services to the estates under my charge'; then the House of Assembly voted him a grant of £100 as a personal donation, requesting the Missionary Society in this case to waive its rule against the acceptance of such gifts. The present was forwarded with a kind and complimentary letter from the Speaker of the House. A greater contrast in temper and policy could hardly be conceived than that simultaneously presented by the Legislatures of Tobago and Jamaica. Nelson fully appreciated the friendliness of the Legislature toward himself, but insisted on making over the bounty to the chapel trustees.

Progress in the conversion of the Negroes continued to be disappointingly slow until after Emancipation; the Tobago Circuit was still numerically the weakest in the District. The Church membership in 1833 was reckoned at 74, of whom 46 were slaves. The Committee in 1831 cut down the staff, and John Briddon remained the sole Missionary on the ground. Next year he writes in alarm respecting the debt upon the Scarborough chapel. Certain creditors are pressing for payment, and the trustees, chagrined at the lack of sympathy in England, talk of letting the building go! The crisis, however, was surmounted, and the Mission held its ground, to see prosperity come with further patience. Briddon reports no marked revival in the Circuit, but a sustained growth in personal piety amongst the Church members. During the six years between



Nelson's removal and the date of Emancipation, beside John Briddon, James Rathbone, William Fidler, and Everitt Vigis served on this station. The last named laboured in the islands for ten years, three of which were devoted to Tobago. He was a man of strong individuality, of a vigorous and cultivated mind, a racy style, unassuming manners, and great good-nature. He returned home in 1835, to labour long and usefully in England.

ST LUCIA appears for a year or two on the Stations before 1833, but received no actual appointment up to that date. DEMERARA was included at first in the St. Vincent District; this outlying Mission is reserved for a later chapter.

## VII

### THE BAHAMAS, BERMUDAS, AND HAITI PRIOR TO EMANCIPATION

The Bahamas—An Appeal from Nassau—William Turton—Eleuthera occupied—A Hurricane in Nassau—Reinforcements—Death of William Turton—The Apostle of the Bahamas—Religious Persecution—Growth of the Church. Bermuda—Visited by Whitefield—John Stephenson—Opposition—Hostile Legislation—The Missionary in Prison—Appointment of Joshua Marsden—Encouraging Success—Educational Effort—James Dunbar and Moses Rayner—Slave Marriages—James Horne. Haiti—A Unique Field—French Haiti—Toussaint L'Ouverture—Dessalines—The Eastern Section—Spanish Government—Revolution—A Black Republic—An Appeal to the Methodist Church—A Fury of Persecution—The Methodists of Port-au-Prince—The First Missionaries—St. Denis Bauduy.

WILLIAM TURTON, the planter's son of Barbados, and the missionary pioneer of Tobago and St. Bartholomew, founded the Methodist Mission in THE BAHAMAS. To these islands he was sent at the end of his probation<sup>1</sup> by the Conference of 1799, his work being placed in the first instance 'under the direction' of William Fish of Jamaica—a direction little more than nominal. Turton did not reach his post until October, 1800. Sailing from Antigua on the last day of May in that year, he landed at Turk's Islands, the southernmost of the Bahamas, four days later; but he sought in vain the means of transit thence to Nassau (on the island of New Providence),<sup>2</sup> the capital of the group, and in the end had to go round by New York to reach his destination. This was only an extreme example of the difficulties of communication between different parts of the West Indies a century ago.

When attending the Methodist Episcopal Conference in 1796, Dr. Coke received a pressing application from Nassau for

<sup>1</sup> Turton had visited Tobago as a lay Preacher under the direction of the local Missionaries. He was a mature and experienced man, thirty-five years of age, when he joined the ministry, and was appointed to St. Barts.

<sup>2</sup> New Providence is called 'Providence Island' on its first appearance in the *Minutes of Conference*.

a Missionary. Two years earlier his old assistant, William Hammet, now officiating independently at Charles (U.S.A.), hearing of the sad condition of the Bahamians, had sent a negro evangelist to Nassau for their benefit, who for a while preached with acceptance and success, raising up a Society of black people among the islanders. This man fell a victim to temptation ; and two successors, commissioned in turn by Hammet, in different ways morally succumbed. A small chapel was built at Nassau on behalf of Hammet's mission, and some faithful souls were joined in fellowship there, despite the scandals brought upon the infant Church. This derelict flock turned to the Methodist Mission for help ; they urged not only their own unhappy plight, but the spiritual destitution of the islands at large. It was three years before their cry could be answered. Meanwhile another negro preacher of Methodist antecedents, named Paull, came across on his own account from the United States. Part of Hammet's Society accepted Paull's ministry, and the little chapel passed into his hands.<sup>1</sup> This movement, however, in a few years proved abortive. The majority of the Society, held together under the leadership of Anthony Wallace and his wife—a pair of devoted and greatly esteemed coloured people—who had hoped against hope for the granting of a Methodist Missionary, received Turton with warm satisfaction. He was in spirit and ability the very man required for this undertaking ; although he arrived in ill-health due to his tedious and difficult voyage, he won the respect of the people, both white and black, from the beginning, and exercised a remarkable influence over all classes of Bahamians until his death sixteen years later. William Turton was a man of deep piety, of excellent temper, of exceeding diligence and faithfulness, and of much practical wisdom. When debilitated and unable to travel, he writes (in 1817) : ' It is my happiness, my heaven, to be employed for God.' His West Indian rearing gave him special aptitude for dealing with the conditions of island society.<sup>2</sup> This origin

<sup>1</sup> James Paull, the black Preacher referred to, appears after a while to have attached himself to the Anglican Church ; at any rate, the chapel was used as its property. The Anglican claim was, however, contested, and in 1844 the little old building was restored by the legal authorities to the Methodists, who have used it since as a Mission-room.

<sup>2</sup> The Conference record of William Turton (1818) describes him as ' a man of colour.' The obituary is an official document, and ought to be trustworthy ; the authors relied upon it in the paragraph relating to Turton in the original edition of *Wesley's World Parish* (p. 57). But a letter from Mr. Turton's widow has subsequently

did not, unfortunately, secure him sound health ; the hardships he passed through in Tobago permanently weakened his constitution, and he would never allow himself the indulgences of an invalid. Throughout his active service in the Bahamas he was a sufferer, repeatedly laid aside by severe and protracted illness, which terminated his valuable life.

The New Providence station was credited with 100 Church members—all coloured people or Blacks—in 1802, when the earliest enumeration appears in the *Minutes*. This figure indicates the gratifying success realized during the first year of Turton's labours. Anthony Wallace's dwelling supplied the original preaching-place at Nassau. As the congregation grew, this house was appropriated for its use ; by removing the party walls a hall was formed to accommodate 200 hearers. The generous owners sought another domicile. Turton obtained a licence to preach from the Governor without much difficulty. There was, it is said, an old statute which forbade preaching to the slaves ; it was treated as obsolete, and was never enforced against the Missionaries. Exception was taken to the holding of Methodist services in Church hours,<sup>1</sup> and on one occasion Turton received a notice from the police requiring him to desist from administering the Lord's Supper ; but the attempts at Anglican repression were not sustained. The Missionary had an ally on the bench of magistrates in the Hon. Thomas Forbes, who proved 'an unshaken friend, defending his character in every place' ; and 'the Hon. Judge Kelshall,' Turton writes, 'helped by his influence to make things easy.' So the first Missionary to the Bahamas, on the whole, got fair play ; he knew nothing of the violence and the judicial outrages perpetrated on his brethren in Jamaica and Barbados.

In 1802 Turton commenced open-air preaching in East Nassau, at the other end of the town from Wallace's meeting-

come to light, in which this lady protests against the above description. We do not find any other allusion, outside the obituary, to Mr. Turton's 'colour.' His exceptional influence amongst the numerous Whites of the Bahamas speaks for his purity of blood. Had he been known as a man of mixed race, prejudice would inevitably have stood in his way ; the difficulty, if not insuperable, would certainly have been *noticeable*. The probability is that the remark in the obituary was a mistaken inference, made by some one in England, from Turton's West Indian birth. We observe that in the same obituary the commencement of the subject's ministry is dated from 1798 instead of 1795 ; this betrays a want of care in the writer.

<sup>1</sup> A succession of S.P.G. Missionaries were sent out during the eighteenth century to the Bahamas, but the early Methodist Missionaries who laboured in the northern islands came across no Anglican clergyman outside of Nassau. The clergymen resided chiefly in the southern (Windward) Bahamas, where many Loyalist fugitives from the United States had settled at the peace of 1783.



house. Unable to hire a suitable building, he determined to erect a chapel in the new district, Mr. Forbes lending assistance. Turton invested in this undertaking much of his little private fortune, and in later years found himself embarrassed for want of the money locked up in the East Nassau Chapel. However, the sanctuary was completed and became very popular. To further meet the expense incurred through the opening of the second chapel Turton started a Day School, taught by himself, to alleviate the aggravations of his burdens. About the same time he married a lady of Nassau, the earliest white convert of his ministry there, who proved for the four remaining years of her life an invaluable helper.

In 1804, when a membership of 160 was reported from the New Providence Circuit (about 10 of them Whites), an assistant was granted for Turton's help. This was John Rutledge, a capable, painstaking Irish Preacher, who won great esteem in the islands. His health gave way after ten years' labour, and he located in Eleuthera, where he married a lady of property, intending to return to the ministry when strong enough to do so and meanwhile rendering unpaid service. His wife had come into possession, involuntarily, of a number of slaves, whom they proposed to free gradually, upon a carefully considered plan. The Missionary Committee disapproved this arrangement, and ultimately Rutledge's name was dropped from the Stations, to the general regret.<sup>1</sup> Remaining in Eleuthera, he continued to be friendly and useful until his lamented death in 1826.

The coming of a helper enabled Turton to extend his operations beyond New Providence. Early in 1805 he visited Harbour Island, lying a day's sail north-eastwards. This island has a good climate, and the invalid stayed here four weeks with benefit to his health, founding a Society which prospered in after years. On the way to Harbour Island Turton was driven by stress of weather to touch at the larger Eleuthera bearing southwards, on which island he preached to 'a few white and

<sup>1</sup> It appears that the legal instrument conveying the slaves to Mrs. Rutledge made it impossible for her to manumit them forthwith. The Missionary Committee would not be satisfied with anything short of immediate liberation. Mrs. Rutledge had been a great benefactor to the Nassau Society, and the act of the Committee toward her and her husband was regarded as peremptory and harsh. Though losing his status in the ministry, Rutledge continued for several years to do, unsalaried, the work of a missionary labourer under the direction of his former brethren, to whom in their sickness his house again and again supplied shelter and nursing. He continued also to report his proceedings and observations to the Missionary Committee at home.

coloured people ' the first Gospel sermon heard upon its shores. Soon after his return from Harbour Island to Nassau an anxious inquirer visited him from Rock Sound,<sup>1</sup> the capital of Eleuthera; this was Hannah Sands, a lady who for a quarter of a century afterwards proved a mother in Israel to her own island. Her coming led to Turton's revisiting Eleuthera in May of the same year, leaving Rutledge in charge at Nassau. Eleuthera had a population of 2,000, of whom two-thirds were Whites, gathered chiefly about the settlements of Rock Sound and Tarpum Bay. Reporting his experiences to Dr. Coke, Turton writes :

Prior to my arrival, though the worthy magistrate had exerted himself to work a reformation, cursing, swearing, drinking to excess, Sabbath-breaking, quarrelling, and every kind of wickedness prevailed. Scarcely, however, had I begun to preach to them before many received the word with all readiness of mind, and a remarkable reformation took place, evidently wrought of God.

So promising was the work on this island that Turton, committing to Rutledge the New Providence Circuit, which by this time had extended beyond the town of Nassau, settled here for the time. The people were excessively poor (for this reason slaves were few in Eleuthera) and could do little for their Minister's maintenance, so Mr. and Mrs. Turton kept school in order to spare the Society's funds, as they had already done in New Providence. The occupation of Eleuthera greatly increased the proportion of Whites in the Bahamas Societies. Mr. Thomas Hilton, schoolmaster and magistrate of Rock Sound, was made Class-leader.

In the autumn of 1806 a hurricane, following upon a long drought, visited the Bahamas, and wrought fearful havoc on the east side of Eleuthera. The Rock Sound Mission house, built by the hands of the people, headed by their Minister, withstood the gale, and afforded a refuge to the houseless, and Turton's representations secured aid from Government for the stricken islanders; but their losses compelled many Eleutherans to seek other homes, and the struggling Society was further

<sup>1</sup> Often called *Wreck Sound*, and bearing this name in documents of the period. The inhabitants had a bad reputation as *wreckers*. Soon after the Mission commenced disciplinary inquiry had to be made into the conduct of Church members charged with pillage on the occasion of a shipwreck in the neighbourhood. Happily they were cleared of guilt; but the incident was significant. Methodism put an end to this shocking crime in the Bahamas, as earlier it had done on the coast of Cornwall, by the creation of a new public sentiment.

impoverished. Nevertheless, the work of God went forward, reaching every part of this comparatively large island, in which Turton made his head quarters, until, after the appointment of a third Missionary, he removed to Harbour Island, planting his new colleague at Eleuthera.

Mrs. Turton died in September, 1807, at Nassau, universally lamented ; her husband, falling dangerously ill after her death, sought health by a visit to the United States made in the spring of the next year. There he was detained for thirteen months in consequence of the embargo laid upon American vessels which arose from the dispute between the States and Great Britain over the maritime policy enforced by the latter country in her war with France.<sup>1</sup> The affairs of the Mission were wisely conducted, in Turton's absence, by Rutledge. Turton brought back with him from America a new wife, who showed herself, like the first Mrs. Turton, a true Missionary ; this lady survived her husband many years, and was long remembered in the islands for her good works. A letter written in 1808 dwells upon the striking contrast manifest between the Bahamas and Jamaica at this time in the position of Methodism and the public attitude toward missionary work. In the former islands, it is said, ' there is not one to move a tongue or lift a finger against ' religion ; ' so that, if it be not universally, it is at least generally, respected.'

Up till 1811 the Bahamas Circuit had been annexed to the Antigua District. The great distance and absence of direct traffic precluded its Ministers from attendance at the regular Synod. A Bahamas sub-Synod was accordingly summoned in 1810, which the Antigua Chairman failed to reach. Several competent laymen attended this gathering ; it elected a lay Secretary. On the appointment of the third Preacher (William Dowson, transferred from Trinidad, who arrived in March, 1812, after a three months' voyage) the Bahamas were made a distinct District, with William Turton for Chairman. By this date the Church membership was 505, of whom 254 were white folk ; the membership of Eleuthera now rivalled that of New Providence. Though the new District had so small a constituency, its formation was justified by the results. Its

<sup>1</sup> The commerce of the West Indies suffered severely at this period from the closing of the American markets to their produce, the Bahamas being affected most of all. The misunderstandings between England and America culminated in the unhappy war of 1812-14, which was disastrous to the trade of the islands.

Missionaries were tried and judicious men ; they were able now to act more promptly, forming and carrying out their own plans. The Mission began to make swift advance ; by the year 1815 its Church membership had risen to 1,064. Of these 404 were Whites—a number exceeding that of all the Methodists of this colour in the rest of the West Indies.

But a heavy calamity befell the Church in Nassau at this period. In 1812 a new and commodious chapel, built of stone, had been erected to replace the preaching-room furnished by Wallace's house, which was by this time entirely inadequate. William Turton returned to New Providence in order to carry through this enterprise, commenced by John Rutledge. It was successfully achieved, notwithstanding the poverty inflicted on the people through the war. The outlay had not yet been fully met when on July 26, 1813, the new house of God was wrecked by a hurricane, which proved terribly destructive both to life and property in the town. Once more the Nassau Society and congregation found shelter in a private dwelling ; at the end of three years the Church met again under its own roof. Its numbers and spirit were unimpaired by the catastrophe. The New Providence Societies had grown to nearly 400 members, the congregations amounting to not far short of 1,000 people.

In 1814 Rutledge retired, but the Mission staff was raised from three to five by the appointment from England of Joseph Ward, Roger Moore, and Michael Head. The powerful impression the first-named made in Trinidad, where he touched on his way to the Bahamas, has brought him already into notice ; he reached his Circuit in the spring of 1815. Ward was undoubtedly one of the most talented and most ardent Missionaries ever seen in the West Indian field—' the greatest labourer,' writes Rutledge, ' our part of the vineyard can boast of.' His eloquence was rousing and attractive in a high degree ; wherever he went he drew crowds about him. Part of his brief course was spent on Abaco, a large island north-west of Eleuthera, colonized by British Loyalists from South Carolina, whither Turton sent Ward at the request of the colonists.<sup>1</sup> In 1816 he was stationed at Harbour Island. The flame of zeal burnt too intensely for the young man's strength, and his colleagues urged moderation upon him in vain. His

<sup>1</sup> This island was sparsely peopled and so little able to support its Minister that, deserving as the people were, it was questionable whether a resident Missionary could be stationed there.



career proved as short as it was brilliant ; he died at Nassau in September, 1817. His funeral was the largest ever seen on the island. Michael Head ran an even briefer race, arriving towards the close of 1815 and succumbing to fever in November, 1817. He was employed on hard pioneer work ; he followed Ward at Abaco,<sup>1</sup> where the latter had broken ground, and then, after surmounting the initial difficulties there, was sent to start the Mission on Long Island. The year 1817-18 witnessed the death of Father Turton as well as that of his two devoted helpers. His health, never really sound, rapidly deteriorated from 1815 onwards. In 1816 he handed over the District Chairmanship to William Wilson, who had been six years employed in the English Circuits when commissioned for this charge. Becoming Supernumerary, Turton resorted a second time to the States to recruit his health. His malady was now too far advanced, and he returned worse rather than better. Feeble as he was, he resumed work, taking the place vacated at Abaco by Head's death and visiting the other Circuits in turn. He writes from Harbour Island in 1817 :

Although I carry a heavy, painful, and debilitated body, God has blessed me with uncommon strength to assist in His service. With regard to preaching, I do not know that I ever enjoyed such liberty in declaring the truths of the Gospel.

But his strength was undermined, and the renewed attempt to pursue his beloved task proved quickly fatal ; suddenly he passed away, worn out in the fifty-seventh year of his age. William Turton accomplished in seventeen years a work for God such as might well have occupied a full life-time. He deserves to be called the Apostle of the Bahamas.

At the full tide of success, and with invitations from unoccupied islands pressing upon it, the Bahamas Mission had lost by death half its staff within a few months. William Dowson, an indefatigable worker, frequently disabled by sickness, had withdrawn from the field a couple of years before this

<sup>1</sup> Off Abaco is the little island of Green Turtle Cay, with a numerous population—fishing and seafaring—amongst whom Methodism has flourished. The soil of Abaco is poor, and the island was far from prosperous. In later years sponge-gathering has become a remunerative industry. Like those of Eleuthera, the people were reputed *wreckers*. This name, however, had not in these islands the murderous meaning it possessed elsewhere ; a 'wrecker' was one who traded on wrecks and took advantage of them ; the islanders were accused, not of *causing* wrecks, but of carrying off the spoil.

time.<sup>1</sup> William Wilson and Roger Moore alone remained to tend Churches spread over half-a-dozen islands. Moore, posted at Abaco, had Eleuthera and Harbour Island under his care besides. The Societies suffered decline from want of pastoral oversight ; but for the generous unofficial help of Rutledge the loss would have been much greater. The Ministers had a few Exhorters at their command, and were supported by white Class-leaders of good quality ; but competent Local Preachers were still to seek. Wilson was a worthy Chairman, and managed District affairs with steady efficiency until 1823, when he returned to England ; he 'travelled' in the Home Circuits for above twenty years longer, and died in 1848.<sup>2</sup> Roger Moore, who arrived along with Michael Head in 1815, though a delicate man, bore the strain of solitude and the cares and anxieties of the crisis well. Moore was a man of calm temperament and commanding character, associated with high intelligence and some scholarly culture. His letters from the field are particularly interesting and well written. During his ten years in this District (1815-25) he occupied in turn all the Bahamian Stations, being the first Missionary appointed to Turk's Island.<sup>3</sup> After two years' ministry (1825-27) in the mild climate of Bermuda he returned home. In the home service Roger Moore attained distinction as Superintendent and Chairman of Districts. He lived to the age of ninety, retaining his faculties but little impaired to the last.

The Missionary Committee could not at once meet the wants of the bereaved District. John Turtle, arriving in June, 1818, was the first helper sent out. 'A man of great worth and no ordinary talents,' Turtle gave seven years of his young manhood to the Bahamas, where he finished his course in 1825. The people loved him, and his ministry was everywhere fruitful. This Mission was favoured in the character of its

<sup>1</sup> In 1815 Dowson retired to England. His name reappears on the foreign stations in 1823 at Bermuda ; six years more he served in the islands ; from 1831-33 he laboured in the northern colonies ; was in Home Circuits for ten years after this ; finally he returned as a Missionary to Bermuda (he had married a Bermudan lady), where he ended his days in 1846.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson published a brief and touching memoir of his wife, who died on the Mission Field—an exemplary saint and servant of the Church.

<sup>3</sup> The little group of Turk's Islands forms the extreme south-east of the Bahamas, lying remote from the islands occupied by the Mission. William Dowson was detained for several weeks here in sailing from Trinidad to New Providence (1812). Finding a people eager for the Gospel, he wrote to Hatton Garden urging the dispatch of a Missionary thither. The opening was kept in view, but it was nine years before entrance was possible. Later Turk's Island was attached to the Haiti District, and finally to Jamaica.

early Ministers, who without exception 'walked worthily of the Gospel.' After Turtle, two other young men arrived to reinforce the depleted staff<sup>1</sup>; but not till 1821 were the five Circuits—of New Providence, Eleuthera, Abaco, Harbour Island, and Turk's Island—all manned again.

The West Indian spirit of religious persecution did not fail to assert itself in the Bahamas; it was aroused in many quarters by the servile insurrection of 1816 in Barbados. A party existed in the Assembly and local council, powerful out of all proportion to its influence amongst the population, which regarded with jealousy the advance of Methodism and was apprehensive of its effect on the minds of the slaves. This clique succeeded in carrying through the Legislature by adroitness and secrecy a measure—resembling those adopted in Jamaica and Trinidad—which prohibited under severe penalties religious meetings between sunset and sunrise, thus debarring the slaves from missionary instruction. The Bill of 1816 also directed that every preacher, exhorter, and teacher must have his licence renewed, with precise definition of the place where and the people to whom he should minister. The latter regulation was devised of set purpose to circumvent the Methodist plan of Circuit itinerancy. This piece of legislation, which received the Governor's assent, was sprung on the Methodists without warning or opportunity given for consultation or protest. The limitation of the hours of public worship was put in force immediately as an order of police, and caused painful embarrassment at every preaching-station. The part of the Bill prescribing the renewal of licences, which threatened the complete suspension of Methodist operations in these islands, was referred to the decision of the home Government. This determined attempt at the suppression of Methodism took William Turton entirely by surprise; the distress it caused him probably hastened his end. The Act was promptly quashed by the veto of the British Crown; by this time the Colonial Office was familiar with the manœuvres of the West Indian slaveholders. Not, however, until 1821, when the Bahamian Legislature repealed the 'sunset-to-sunrise' law, were the obnoxious regulations in restraint of preaching to the slaves

<sup>1</sup> These were John Davis (1819) and John Gick (1821)—the latter a Manxman. Each served about three years in the Bahamas. Davis was transferred to South Africa, where he laboured for five years and then left the ministry; Gick, after a year in another W.I. District, returned home invalided. He died in 1836.

completely abolished. The effect of the above troubles is seen in the membership returns of the Bahamas District for 1820, when the number of persons in Society is reported at 1,115—a trifling increase upon that for 1815.

About 1820 the island Legislature took a milder turn in dealing with negro questions. In 1822 it modified in favour of the slave the law hitherto prevailing through the West Indies, that under no circumstances should his evidence, though taken on oath, be accepted against a white person. Other measures designed to ameliorate the condition of negro bondmen, to remove the injustice under which they laboured, and the reproaches against the white colonists on this account, were adopted in following years. The marriage of slaves was legalized in 1824,<sup>1</sup> and limits were imposed on their corporal chastisement; the separation of families by sale was restricted by an Act passed in 1830. The slave-owners hoped by such concessions to avert Emancipation; moreover, a genuine humanitarian spirit had sprung up amongst them. They held slave labour to be necessary for the cultivation of tropical lands, and servitude to be best for the black labourer; they believed that it might be carried on under benevolent and morally safe conditions.

From 1820 onwards the Bahamian Mission resumed its advance; five years later its membership was 1,271—an increase of 14 per cent.; in 1830 it had grown to 1,372; by the year of Emancipation it was 1,799, of whom more than 1,300 were free persons, about half of these probably being Whites. Bermuda, hitherto under the distant jurisdiction of the Antigua Synod, but annexed to this District in 1822, furnished 373 of the above number.

With the addition of Bermuda, the Bahamian Circuits remained the same in designation as those fixed twelve years earlier, when Turk's Island was occupied. As time went on, an increasing number of the outlying islands and Cays<sup>2</sup> were visited and included in the Circuits, so that all but the south-

<sup>1</sup> Until 1835, when permission was given to Dissenting Ministers to conduct the ceremony, marriage could only be solemnized by the three Anglican clergymen then (1824) resident in the islands and by certain specifically qualified Justices of the Peace, who required fees prohibitive for the poorer Negroes. In the case of slaves, the master's permission was necessary for legal marriage. Previously to 1835 the Governor, if liberally disposed, would frequently license Methodist Missionaries to marry in islands where no clergyman resided.

<sup>2</sup> A word identical with *Quay*, and often written *Key*, signifying a *reef* or *barrier*, in common use in the Bahamas and in some parts of Spanish America.



western quarter of this extended group came under the preaching of the Gospel through Methodist agency before the epoch of civil liberation.

James Horne was brought over from Jamaica to superintend the work in the Bahamas when William Wilson returned to England in 1824. Horne, however, with his great ability and charm, had not all the qualities requisite for Chairmanship, and was replaced in this office by William Dowson on the resumption by the latter of work in the Mission. For reasons of health Dowson was posted in 1823 at Bermuda; both his Circuit and the District suffered by the attempt at administration from this outlier of the diocese. In 1825 he returned to the Bahamas, but two years later was promoted to the Chair of the Jamaica District, John Crofts being transferred from Jamaica to fill his place. Before long Dowson was compelled to seek in Nova Scotia a cooler climate. In 1827 Horne was recalled home; speedily returning, he devoted seven years more (1828-35) of his effective ministry to Bermuda and the Bahamas. In that year four of the five Missionaries assigned to the District were new men, Roger Moore alone remaining of the former staff. Beside John Crofts—a Preacher equally diligent in study and the pastorate, a judicious and kindly administrator, who presided over the District for six years and laboured in the West Indies for twelve—George Beard was also transferred from Jamaica. Two notable recruits arrived at that date from England. One of these was John Baxter Brownell, son of the famous West Indian pioneer, John Brownell, who himself had a long missionary course. After seven years in the Bahamas and Bermuda, he served the Society for a similar term in Malta, and gave the residue of his days to Canada, where he was eminently useful. The other of this pair was Theophilus Pugh, who laboured for a decade in the District, and became a power in it—keen, energetic, discerning, a fervent Preacher and a capable administrator, apt sometimes to be masterful. Pugh returned to the English ministry in 1846; he attained a ripe and honoured old age, dying in 1874. Care was manifestly taken to have the Bahamas, after their many losses and changes, well manned again. During the later twenties and early thirties several other names appear for a short term on the Bahamian Stations of men who failed to complete their probation here. The

peculiar isolation, and the burden of responsibilities falling even on the youngest Missionary posted in this field, were severely testing; sometimes these trials were more than unseasoned men could bear.

The ten years antecedent to Emancipation were marked by few outstanding events in the quiet progress of the Bahama Circuits. A hurricane in 1824 devastated Eleuthera, levelling most of the chapels; that of Tarpum Bay alone escaped serious damage. The Missionaries were casting eyes of desire across the water south-westwards to Cuba, 'the pearl of the Antilles,' longing for the day when the Gospel might be carried to this great and populous island. 'From the first,' writes George Lester,<sup>1</sup> 'the work (in the Bahamas) has been regarded as a step toward Cuba.' But the advance was to remain for long an idle hope; every approach was barred by the intolerance of the Spanish Government and the Roman priests who, too often careless of their spiritual duties, had the keenest scent for heresy. A consignment of Spanish New Testaments, however, procured from the British and Foreign Bible Society, was sold at Nassau to visitors and traders from Cuba, who distributed them at home—sometimes at sixfold the purchase price. By such means the Word of God found its way through the barrier, and failed not to 'accomplish that whereto God had sent it'—thus William Wilson informs us through a letter of his, describing the Bible-traffic. In 1828 the Bahamian House of Assembly, so hostile at an earlier date, made some atonement for former injuries by a grant of £200 toward the building of a third Methodist chapel in Nassau. At this period, and for forty years later, the Anglican Church was on the Establishment footing, and received large annual grants from colonial revenues.

Schools for the Negroes were a prime desideratum in the Bahamas not less than in other parts of the West Indies; the black people of this District, in general more intelligent and alert than those in islands where the plantation system extensively prevailed, were eager for mental improvement. With the approach of freedom their education became cryingly necessary. Out of their scanty means and appliances the Missionaries did much to promote this object, which had been kept in view from William Turton's first coming. None laid

<sup>1</sup> In *Sunny Isles*, pp. 69, 70.

themselves out for this purpose more completely than Charles Penny and his wife, who came on to the field in 1830 and laboured here devotedly until the death of Mr. Penny four years later. In the setting up and management of Sunday Schools, both at Nassau and Harbour Island, they were conspicuously successful.

As the fall of slavery impended, the tension in public feeling throughout the colonies increased, the air was full of suspicion and evil rumour. In New Providence the report was current that missionary funds were appropriated for the Abolitionist agitation in England; some secessions from the Society took place in consequence. Bitter jealousies toward their black and coloured brethren arose amongst the white Methodists.<sup>1</sup> Penny, then the Nassau Superintendent, complains of a knot of white Leaders who banded together to oppose the Ministers, one of these 'boasting that he had made every Minister that had come to Nassau give up to him!' Fearless of the storm, Penny, as he declares, 'treated the threats and efforts' of the disturbers 'with perfect indifference.'<sup>2</sup> The spirit of restlessness and contention was abroad, but it was counteracted; and while elsewhere the West Indian Societies suffered decline at this epoch, in the Bahamas there was spiritual revival—particularly at Nassau—and greater prosperity.

THE BERMUDAS, though small in size (covering less than twenty square miles, with but 4,000 acres of cultivated land) and supporting a scanty population (about 20,000 at the present time), early attracted missionary enterprise. The Anglican Church was represented by its chaplains from the foundation of the colony in 1612,<sup>3</sup> and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel paid particular attention during the eighteenth century to these islands. But the Bermuda clergy were quite insufficient for the nine parishes, and their character did not always sustain their profession. A persistent Dissenting element was found amongst the settlers, which

<sup>1</sup> One of the latter, at Nassau, frankly refused to teach any longer in the Sunday School, because 'the Negroes knew too much already!'

<sup>2</sup> These vexatious men, writes Penny, were 'rank politicians and strong opposers of the British Government.'

<sup>3</sup> Two clergymen were sent out to minister to the original colonists settled in Bermuda under the auspices of the Virginia Company, to whom James I granted by charter the possession of the island. These Ministers held Puritan sentiments, as did a number of their parishioners, and a strict moral discipline was imposed at the outset on the colony.

centred in the Presbyterian Church existing at the little town of Warwick.<sup>1</sup> But godlessness and profligacy—the nemesis of slavery—prevailed amongst the Whites, while the souls of the black folk were utterly neglected until the Methodist Mission appeared. The slaves, who formed two-thirds of the population and were largely employed as domestic servants, mechanics, and dock-labourers, were treated more kindly than the plantation Negroes of other regions; but they were scarcely recognized as human beings, and stood outside the pale of education and Christianity.

Bermuda has interesting missionary associations belonging to the eighteenth century. Here, in 1725, the famous Bishop Berkeley, then Dean of Derry, proposed to establish an Anglican College for the training of Missionaries for America. The scheme was large and far-seeing, and won considerable sympathy in England; the British Government held out hopes of pecuniary aid. But this promise remained unfulfilled, and Berkeley was compelled to abandon the project for want of financial support. In 1748 George Whitefield visited Bermuda in the course of his American tour, and spent nearly three months on the islands, preaching with much satisfaction and leaving a manifest blessing behind him. There was no one, alas, to continue the evangelism commenced by Whitefield. The flame he kindled was kept alive, however, by a few earnest souls amongst the colonists, and through the occasional help of visitors calling at Bermuda on errands of business or driven to its harbour by storms. Amongst the latter was Duncan McColl, later the father of New Brunswick Methodism, whose connexion with Bermuda has been noted; his testimony made a deep impression at St. George's.

Subsequently to McColl's visit Captain Travise, a zealous Methodist of Baltimore, called at the islands several times in the course of trade, and used every opportunity of visiting from house to house and holding meetings for prayer and exhortation.

<sup>1</sup> The persecutions of Charles II's reign drove a crowd of Nonconformists to Bermuda, amongst them two noted Preachers of that time, Nicholas Leverton and John Oxenbridge. The earlier settlers were largely of the Puritan persuasion. In consequence, Nonconformity became so far ascendant that in 1679 'the influence' of the Episcopal Church 'was nearly annihilated. . . . Two-thirds of the inhabitants were Presbyterians . . . and the clergy of the Church who still lingered were either rebels against her authority or defective and reluctant observers of it.' See Anderson's *History of the Church in the Colonies*, Vol. I., p. 300, quoted in T. Watson Smith's *Methodism in Eastern British America*. (To the chapters of the latter work relating to Bermuda we are greatly indebted.) The influence won by Nonconformity in the Bermudas toward the end of the seventeenth century waned during the eighteenth.



Travise's visits were prized by the little circle of praying folk.

The first definite appeal to the Methodist authorities in England was made by Captain Mackie, Commander of H.M.S. *Thetis*, then on the Halifax naval station, who inspected the Bermudas in discharge of his official duties. This gentleman wrote to Dr. Coke in the course of the year 1789:

I believe that a good, judicious Preacher might be the means, by the blessing of God, of doing much good here, not only among the Blacks, but among the white people also; many thousands of people are in the islands, but very few are found to instruct them or give them advice concerning their salvation.

He refers to the three clergymen in occupation of the nine parishes of Bermuda. 'One of them a very bad character,' he says; 'another incapacitated by age'; the third 'a mere moral Preacher.' The only public witness for the Gospel was the Presbyterian Minister, Enoch Matson, of Warwick; he was in poor health and unequal to his duties. Mackie thought the Bermudians would do much to support a competent Missionary; he speaks of their talent for *singing* as a condition favourable to the acceptance of Methodism. A letter was addressed to the same quarter by Mr. Matson, who in earlier days had been a Methodist Preacher in the States, supporting Captain Mackie's statements, and affirming his belief that a work for God was possible in the Bermudas which only Methodism could accomplish. Matson was impelled to this conclusion partly by the protest raised in his own congregation against the admittance at the Lord's Table of the coloured sexton of his Church, a blameless Christian man. The original communications of Mackie and Matson miscarried, and had to be repeated. It was not till his visit to England in 1798 that Captain Mackie came to an understanding with Dr. Coke about the Bermuda Mission.

Coke now set himself to find a Missionary for this field. His choice fell upon John Stephenson, a Preacher of the Irish Conference, fifty years of age, whose 'long-trying piety, zeal, and prudence' guaranteed his suitability. The Government in London, through Dr. Coke, offered a free passage to Stephenson and his companion missionary voyager bound for Jamaica—a favour due to the conspicuous loyalty of the Methodists in the recent attack of the French upon the British West Indies.

Ordained by Coke for his new ministry, and provided with a certificate from a Dublin alderman furnished by request of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Stephenson with his family sailed from Dublin early in 1799; he reached Bermuda, by way of New York, on May 10.

Unexpected hostility awaited the Missionary. John Wesley's anti-slavery sentiments were known in the islands, and had raised a lively prejudice against his Preachers. It was maliciously given out that *an Irishman* was coming, and 'Irish' was a name of ill-savour among British Loyalists in consequence of the rebellion and the shocking massacres of 1798. The plot laid by the Bermudian Negroes to murder the Whites forty years before was recalled; an Irish Methodist conspirator, it was suggested, was the very man to renew such attempts. The Governor was importuned to forbid Stephenson's landing, and a crowd gathered to oppose it when his ship was sighted off St. George's harbour. A magistrate who appeared on the scene remonstrated with the mob. 'Oh,' said their spokesman, 'he is an Irishman, a rebel, and a Methodist, and will put all kinds of mischief into the minds of the Blacks.' 'There are many things imported into Bermuda,' rejoined the magistrate, 'that will put more evil into their minds than he will. *One puncheon of rum* will do more in this way than ever he will do all the days of his life! And if he has a good *method* with him, I'm sure we want it here; and therefore we will not banish him till we hear him.' Through the interposition of this Bermudian Nicodemus the Missionary was permitted to come on shore; the magistrate who took his part so sensibly proved a friend in later emergencies. The Governor of the islands, on examining his credentials, told Stephenson that he needed no further licence, for the same liberty of conscience existed in Bermuda as in Great Britain.

This reception was reassuring, and the Missionary commenced his work with confidence. Leaving St. George's, he established himself at Hamilton, the other and larger town of Bermuda, occupying a central position upon the main island of the group.<sup>1</sup> Here he opened a preaching-room, which at first was attended by a small and somewhat hostile congregation. Soon the

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton became, and continues to be, the seat of Government, and is much the bigger town of the two. St. George's, situated on the small island of this name, has the advantage of a capacious and secure harbour; here is the Government dockyard, and the trade of the islands passes through this port.

power of Stephenson's ministry began to tell ; his hearers grew more numerous and more attentive. In December he writes :

I met at first with every opposition except blows. . . . But, blessed be God, I have joined 59 members in Society, all of whom are white people ; and very soon I hope to augment the number. Many of the more respectable people are rising on my side, and the family of one magistrate have all joined the Society. We already find it necessary to erect a chapel.

The writer goes on to relate the steps taken toward this end. An acre of ground has been given for the site ; a subscription list has been promisingly started ; in another part of the Hamilton Island a preaching-place is being fitted up. The class-meetings enjoy a living and salvation-bringing fellowship. Four months later, when Stephenson wrote again, he had enrolled 104 members in Society, 30 of them coloured folk. Toward the building of Hamilton Chapel £300 (in Bermudian currency)<sup>1</sup> had been subscribed. The Missionary proceeded with some caution :

I intend doing [he wrote] what I can amongst the Whites at first. . . . If I had begun to collect the Blacks when I first came to the island, I should have raised the whole body of the people against me ; especially as at these times they view me as a rebel. This suspicion, however, is wearing away fast.

But in Stephenson caution never suppressed fidelity.

My predecessor [testified Joshua Marsden after his departure] was a plain, blunt man of the old school. He boldly denounced sin, and preached against prostitution, polygamy, and other forms of evil. Whether a sin were deep rooted, long established, or grafted upon the stalk of profit or interest, was to him of little moment ; he made war upon it in the boldest manner.

A Preacher of John the Baptist's sort was not likely to have peace in Bermuda. The caution and the sense of expediency on which he congratulated himself in writing to Dr. Coke were, in the opinion of many of his friends, not carried far enough. A gentleman of Bermuda, in Stephenson's time an opponent of Methodism, but in later years one of its best supporters, expressed this judgement on the case :

<sup>1</sup> Reckoned at about 12s. to the £.

Had he united the wisdom of the serpent to his innocence, I really believe he would have avoided the persecution he underwent ; but he appeared to suffer his zeal to swallow up his meekness, and was not of the disposition calculated to overcome the prejudice which rested in the minds of people against the Methodists.

If the Missionary was at fault in this respect, he paid grievously for the error. The enemy watched for his halting, and one day a country magistrate summoned Stephenson before him on the charges : (1) of preaching in the house of a mulatto ; (2) of gathering the Blacks for worship and shaking hands with them ; and (3) of reflecting on the established clergy by remarking in a sermon that no man was called of God to the ministry of the Gospel who preached for silver and gold. The accused admitted the facts, and defended himself stoutly. Only on the last count could the shadow of a legal impeachment—for defamation—be made out. The magistrate referred the case to the Governor, who by this time, despite his attachment to religious liberty, had taken alarm at the uprise of Methodism, and conceived a strong dislike toward Stephenson. The animus against the Methodist Preacher was excited, in the first place, by his attention to the Negroes ; in the second place, by his telling attacks on fashionable vices—the two causes of hatred to Methodism throughout the West Indies.

Governor Beckwith regarded the ferment as so dangerous that he summoned the Legislature to deal with it, himself suggesting that preaching to the black and coloured people should be stopped. Accordingly, on April 25, 1800, a Bill was laid before the House of Assembly

to prevent persons pretending to be Ministers of the Gospel, or Missionaries from any religious society whatever, not invested with holy orders according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England or that of Scotland, from acting as preachers.

This outrageous proposal passed the House of Assembly on the same day, with but one dissentient vote ; a month later it was adopted by the council, received the Governor's assent, and became law. It was practically a Bill for the suppression of Methodism of like tenor with the measures adopted, earlier or later, in St. Vincent, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Demerara, for the same purpose. Stephenson's appeals to the Governor and the Attorney-General were treated with contumely. The



penalties attached to transgression in the case of the Preacher (lecturing, writing, and printing were included in the prohibition, along with preaching or exhortation) were a fine of £50, and imprisonment without bail for six months. Any person opening his house for the disqualified Preacher was made liable to the same punishment.

Stephenson resolved to stand his ground, and two leading lay Methodists kept their dwellings open for preaching. On Sunday, June 15, the Missionary, as in his usual course, held Divine service and preached at the house of Mr. Cameron in the morning and of Mr. Pallas in the afternoon. The latter gentleman was a well-known silversmith of Hamilton. Information was laid against the transgressors by an attender at the afternoon service, upon which, two days later, a warrant was issued for the arrest of John Stephenson and Peter Pallas. Both were committed to prison, but after some delay released on bail to await their trial in December. Meanwhile the Act of the Legislature under which the prosecution took place had aroused the resentment of fair-minded people in Bermuda. The Grand Jury meeting in June 'presented' it as 'a violation of all the rights of the subject.' A petition was prepared, and signed by 500 of the most respectable Bermudian residents, requesting the Crown to disallow the Bill. This remonstrance was laid before His Majesty's Council by Dr. Coke in December, together with a memorial in the same sense from the Missionary Committee. Beyond a polite acknowledgement of the receipt of the appeals they remained unnoticed<sup>\*</sup>; in the course of three years the obnoxious statute lapsed for want of the sanction of the Crown. Its immediate purpose had been accomplished in the silencing of the Methodist Preacher; and its ulterior purpose—the extinction of Methodism, and with this the prevention of the evangelization of the Negroes—seemed likely to be realized. The enactors were prepared to revise their repressive measures, with convenient changes in form and wording, when need should arise.

Stephenson was ably defended before the Supreme Court of Bermuda by James C. Eston, an upright and accomplished lawyer, afterwards Chief Justice of the islands, who freely expressed the widely felt indignation at the proceedings of the

<sup>\*</sup> The Colonial Office at that period was notorious for its delays and neglect of business.

prosecutors ; but the Missionary's condemnation was a foregone conclusion. The full penalties of the extemporized statute were inflicted on him, with the costs of the trial. He was consigned to the common gaol of Hamilton. Pallas' case was postponed till the next Assizes on the ground of his indisposition ; the prosecution continued to be held over him. He was advanced in years, and his health broke down under the strain ; some years later he died, worn out with sickness and harassment. Confinement in the unwholesome gaol soon told damagingly upon Stephenson's physique. Five weeks after his incarceration the Governor offered him freedom on condition that he would leave the islands, refusing to let him remain on security given for his observance of the law. Declining the official proposal, Stephenson languished in prison until the expiry of his sentence. He exercised there his ministry by conversation with visitors, and by using his powerful voice to make the dungeon-walls ring at times with the music of Wesley's hymns. On his release he found the Methodist flock in general faithful, and shepherded them for some weeks in private ways as well as he could. But his public work was arrested indefinitely, and his constitution was impaired ; for these reasons he was recalled in 1802. He resumed his Circuit ministry in Ireland, but was physically a broken man ; in the following year he was compelled to desist from 'travelling'. He died in 1810, in the triumph of faith.

Dr. Coke made several unsuccessful attempts to fill Stephenson's place. First he tried John Baxter, of Antigua, who felt himself unequal to the task. Francis Hallett, of Grenada, was then appealed to. The *Minutes* of 1802 contain the singular entry : 'If Brother Hallett do not choose to go to Bermuda, we appoint him for Trinidad'—any choice was better than Bermuda just then ! In 1803 James Lowry, stationed in Nova Scotia, was put down for Bermuda ; he reported himself disabled, and asked leave to come home to England. The next selection was Daniel Fidler, also a Nova Scotia Missionary, who replied virtually, 'I pray thee have me excused.' At last Coke pitched upon William Black, whose self-abnegation was never wanting, and who undertook the forlorn hope. Coke wrote to the Methodists of Halifax (N.S.) prophesying the great work their chief would accomplish if lent for four years to the Bermudas. In the summer of 1804 Black took passage

for the islands from New York, and his luggage was on board when some Bermudian passengers, hearing of the fellow voyager about to join them, gave the captain to understand that they would not sail in such company ! Black was left behind, and, finding no means of conveyance, returned to Nova Scotia. So this designation miscarried, and though Black's name is again attached to Bermuda in the Stations of 1806, he never appeared there. For six long years the station remained unoccupied ; the enemies of Methodism thought their triumph secure.

Coke was in communication with the Bermudian Methodists all the time. The Hamilton Society, he heard, had much declined ; the law which stopped preaching was applied to prevent Methodist gatherings of every kind. The Class-leaders could only carry on their work by domiciliary visits ; the Leaders were discouraged, and members grew careless. At St. George's, on the contrary, there were encouraging symptoms. The hostile Governor had removed ; his successor was reported a just and reasonable man. One of the Bermudian councillors prominent in the persecution of Stephenson was converted to God during his visit to England, and returned to testify amongst his neighbours to ' the faith of which once he made havoc.' Though this gentleman quitted Bermuda in 1806, his witness left behind it a permanent effect. The circumstances last-mentioned were favourable to the redemption of the Mission ; on the other hand, the abolition of the slave trade decreed by Parliament in 1807 had exasperated slave-holders everywhere. Moreover, the action of the British Conference in the same year toward the West Indian Missionaries tended to aggravate the prejudice against Methodism in the islands.

Coke and the Conference resolved to persevere, and Joshua Marsden, a young Minister labouring with much success at St. John, New Brunswick, was chosen for the adventure. In November, 1807, Marsden received instructions from England to proceed to the Bermudas. The call was most unwelcome.

These letters [he writes] were as smoke to the eyes or vinegar to the teeth. I had great reason to doubt whether I had either wisdom, prudence, patience, or faith sufficient for such a Mission. Still, I could not refuse ; the will of my brethren seemed to be the appointment of Providence.

Marsden was encouraged by Colonel Bayard, of Nova Scotia, an old acquaintance of the Governor then presiding in the islands, who gave him a letter of commendation ; the Mayor of St. John also furnished him with credentials. In the spring of 1808, accompanied by his wife and child, he set sail, and in April landed at St. George's. Bermudians on board the schooner conveying the Missionary family assured Marsden that he would be arrested upon landing, as engaged on an unlawful business ; the captain urged him to go on to the Bahamas. ' They are not worthy of a Missionary,' he said, referring to the Bermudians ; ' let them die in their sins ! ' This was not the way to persuade a Methodist Preacher. Marsden waited on Governor Hodgson, presenting his letters of introduction ; the cautious Governor consulted his council and his Attorney-General. Mr. Eston, Stephenson's advocate, now held the latter office. The pronouncement was that no legal bar stood in the Missionary's way ; the Governor, who was a decided Anglican, promised, in honour of Colonel Bayard, such personal aid as he could give.

Though many difficulties and some fears attended Marsden's first movements, these were overcome through the help of friends raised up beyond expectation. After a visit to Hamilton, where he found Mr. Pallas in a sad condition of mind and body, Marsden decided to begin his work at St. George's. Securing a preaching-room, he held service on the Sunday after landing, the congregation of ten being made up from his ship's company, with a few people of colour belonging to the landlord's house. Stephenson's ministry, centring in Hamilton, had but slightly touched St. George's. The spiritual need of the latter place was extreme. The slender influence of its one clergyman was spread over four parishes ; no evangelical light beyond the faint glimmer of Methodism shone in this dark quarter.

Within six weeks of Marsden's coming his hearers had multiplied to sixty, including some anxious seekers of salvation, both white and coloured. Amongst these were considerate and kindly folk, who took thought for their Minister's maintenance and for the upkeep of the humble sanctuary. Cases of unmistakable conversion assured the Missionary that the Lord was working with him. A company of serious young men who had gathered round the converted magistrate, but were now bereft



of their leader, attached themselves to Marsden and gave him hearty assistance. One of these was induced in a little while to open a school for coloured children, which proved of great utility. In June Marsden was able to form a Society-class of 40 persons. The most noteworthy of these was Richard M. Higgs, who stood for a generation as a pillar of Bermudian Methodism. At times perhaps too combative, this gentleman served Methodism both in its spiritual and financial affairs; he fearlessly championed his Church in Bermuda Society, and in the Legislature where in later years he held a seat. By August the St. George's Society had grown to 50; regular preaching was instituted at five outlying places, occasional public services being held at other spots besides.

Marsden met with no open violence, though some of his flock were roughly handled in the streets, and both he and they suffered plentiful raillery. The Methodist Society was nicknamed 'The Negro Club,' and its Minister was known amongst the scornful as 'the Negro Parson.' There was little harm in this; the anti-Methodist animus was confined to narrower circles, and no longer ruled the Legislature, where with better information a more moderate temper began to prevail. Strenuous in all he undertook, Joshua Marsden was at the same time conciliatory in tone and manners. The pressure of public opinion in no way diverted him from his Mission to the Blacks, but he exhibited in pursuing it a *suaviter in modo* wanting to his stern forerunner; the difference of method contributed with the change in atmosphere to the success achieved.

Having planted the Gospel in St. George's, at the end of six months Marsden removed to the Devonshire parish, restoring the Society established by Stephenson, and thence early in 1809 to the town of Hamilton. The dying embers of Methodism in that place were drawn together and the flame revived. A preaching-room was secured, accommodating a congregation of a hundred people, which in a few weeks was crowded. Greatly encouraged, in March, 1809, Marsden resumed Stephenson's defeated project of chapel building and set out collecting for the purpose. He petitioned the Corporation to grant a site for Methodist premises. The result was so favourable that he wrote to a friend in Nova Scotia :

Would you think that some of the same magistrates who sent Mr. Stephenson to prison for preaching the Gospel would give me a lot of land to build the chapel upon to preach the Gospel in? Yet so it is!<sup>1</sup>

Liberal contributions were made toward this object, and much friendliness expressed. In August building was commenced, the Governor of the colony and one of the principal judges laying foundation-stones. In March, 1810, the Missionary, who had superintended the erection with the greatest care, had the joy of opening the first Methodist church in the Bermudas. Scores of white families became regular worshippers, and the coloured people flocked to the place. At this date the Hamilton Church consisted of 60 members. The Circuit in 1811 returned a membership of 135, 29 of them Whites.

The Negroes were eager for instruction, from which they had hitherto been entirely shut out. Loyally assisted by the most intelligent of his white friends, Marsden made the Sunday School efficient for this purpose. These efforts kept alive the old hostility; had Marsden been content with evangelizing his countrymen, he would have gained their universal goodwill; his love of the Negroes brought on him and his fellow workers constant annoyance.<sup>2</sup> The Mayor of Hamilton reproved him on this subject; and when he issued a small collection of hymns for the use of the coloured and black people, copies were sent to the Governor and Attorney-General with letters calling attention to certain dangerous expressions in the publication relating to spiritual 'freedom.' The Attorney replied defending the hymn-book as 'admirably calculated to promote the instruction' of those for whom it was designed. The Bermudians were lovers of song, and hymns were a popular vehicle for Christ's message in this land. The departure of Governor Hodgson in 1810 deprived Marsden of a strong friend; but his prudence and fine temper surmounted the hindrances raised through the ill-will of a bitter faction in the islands.

<sup>1</sup> The Bermudian public was impressed by the circumstance that one of Stephenson's most violent traducers, through some criminal act, fell under the sentence of the law, and found himself eight years later an occupant of the cell where his victim had suffered.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, a lady of Bermuda 'generally regarded as humane and religious,' who had shown marked kindness to Marsden and his family, was deeply offended by his baptizing the child of one of her slaves. She told him that it was a flagrant abuse of the Sacraments to administer them to Blacks!

This good steward of Christ had wrought a wonderful work for his Master in less than three years' ministry. His further tarrying in Bermuda was desirable and greatly desired,<sup>1</sup> but the failure of his wife's health hastened him away; he had himself also contracted a chronic dysentery. In March, 1812, he set sail for New York *en route* for England. The declaration of war between the United States and Great Britain arrested his journey, and he took service under the American Conference for the period of the war, in the enemies' country commending the Gospel of peace. The conflict being over, he resumed his voyage, and reached England in October, 1814. The residue of his ministry was spent fruitfully in home Circuits; he died in 1837, and his body lies amidst the honoured dust in the City Road graveyard. Joshua Marsden had literary as well as oratorical gifts, and published some volumes of religious verse, not without merit, which enjoyed a considerable circulation in their time.

James Dunbar arrived to take Marsden's place two months before the latter departed. Without his predecessor's charm, the new Missionary was a plain, pointed Preacher, a careful, loving pastor, and a thorough disciplinarian; he maintained the good repute of Methodism in the islands, and left the Church in a sound working condition. 'A dear little man was James Dunbar,' said an old Methodist lady of Bermuda many years after. He strove to bring the Bermudian Societies into exact Methodist order, thus supplementing Marsden's work, and held the first Quarterly Meeting in this Circuit. Grievous relapses amongst the coloured converts took place at this juncture, in consequence of which the Circuit membership in 1813 fell to 79. Not for a decade did it regain the numerical level reached in Marsden's time. The war with America brought poverty to Bermuda and straitened the Church. Dunbar was transferred to Nova Scotia at the close of 1814; interchange between that colony and Bermuda henceforth becomes frequent.

Dunbar had been granted a colleague in the person of the Irishman, William Wilson,<sup>2</sup> who followed him in the superintendency. From this date Bermuda was recognized as a two-

<sup>1</sup> At his farewell service in St. George's, Marsden's voice was drowned in the weeping of the crowded assembly; a similar scene was witnessed when he embarked on shipboard.

<sup>2</sup> To be distinguished from the William Wilson of the Bahamas.

preachers' station.<sup>1</sup> Although the constituency was small, the islands were so scattered that no single Missionary could compass the field. Wilson's assistant was the excellent Moses Rayner, who rendered great service in the West Indies; in Bermuda, his first station, Rayner's health gave little promise of his long and energetic career. Rayner's coming enabled Wilson to break new ground; but the transference of his helper to Antigua early in 1816 left the latter in sole charge. His strength in turn gave way, and at the close of 1817 he sought a change of climate, first trying the air of Antigua, and then returning to Ireland, where he died in 1819. Dunbar complained when Wilson was his assistant: 'He will not be prevailed upon either by the doctor or myself to take that care of himself which he ought.' 'I never knew a more conscientious, upright, steady, and punctual man,' writes Rayner concerning the same man. The breakdown of Bermuda Missionaries was not due to unwholesome climate, but to the excessive labour and exposure involved in travelling round the Circuit. Moreover, Bermuda came to be regarded as a place of convalescence for Missionaries enfeebled in health; such men, when stationed here, often proved unequal to the toil imposed on them.<sup>2</sup>

Wilson's successor was William Sutcliffe, a recent Nova Scotia Missionary, who in 1819, after an all but fatal attack of the yellow fever which visited Bermuda in that year, returned to British North America. Sutcliffe was a man of superior powers, whose 'gentle but faithful prosecution of duty' enabled him to meet successfully the revival of persecution then occurring, which was stimulated by the 'High' pretensions of the Anglican clergy. Sutcliffe was left single-handed. Richard Higgs, who was much attached to Sutcliffe, at this time became a Local Preacher—the first appointed in the islands; but for his help in the pulpit the Missionary would have been in despair. Meeting manfully his adversities, Sutcliffe left Bermudian Methodism decidedly stronger than he found it. He resumed his ministry in the northern colonies

<sup>1</sup> The difficulty about this lay in the inadequacy of local Church funds. A heavy debt, absorbing the yearly revenue, burdened the St. George's Chapel built in Dunbar's time. Help toward this erection had been expected from the Missionary Committee, but was refused on principle.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, Rayner, Sutcliffe, were instances of this nature. William Ellis, when worn down with hardships and fatigue in Newfoundland, was ordered to the Bermuda station, but he never arrived.



for two years, and then went home to England in a distressing mental state, from which he made a partial recovery ; becoming a Supernumerary, he lived till 1833. The hardships endured in his first term of service in Nova Scotia left ineffaceable marks upon him.

Finding the Nova Scotia winters more than he could bear, James Dunbar was glad to come back to Bermuda after five years' absence. His second term (1819-23) was happier than the first. Conversions multiplied ; the congregations at St. George's and Hamilton increased ; prejudices died down ; the Society grew from 82 to 109 members. In 1821 Bermuda was handed over by the Antigua to the Bahamas District, in which it remained until 1835, when it was re-attached to Antigua. Restored in 1844 to the Bahamas, this isolated group was six years later transferred to Nova Scotia ; along with this District it was incorporated in the Eastern American Conference on the formation of the latter body in 1855. Dunbar quitted the Bermudas, greatly to the regret of his affectionate people ; he spent many useful years in the home circuits, and reached the fullness of days, dying in 1860 at the age of seventy-nine.

During James Dunbar's second term his people were drawn into association with a Congregational Church in St. George's, which traced its beginnings to Whitefield's memorable visit. When, shortly afterwards, the excellent pastor of this flock died, and no successor could be found, a circle of the scattered Congregationalists joined the Methodists ; amongst these were several choice spirits, whose accession enriched the Society. William Samuel Trott was one of that number. Assisted by his wife and other friends, this gentleman conducted for forty years a well-attended Sabbath School at his own house, which stood in an isolated neighbourhood. Another of the group was Mary Seon, subsequently and for long a Class-leader at Bailey's Bay. In Hamilton at the same period Thomas S. Tuzo came to the front—a zealous layman ready for every good work and never shrinking from 'the reproach of Christ.' By his side stood James Cox, Leader and Local Preacher when scarcely eighteen years old. Cox was called to the West Indian ministry, in which he held for many years a leading place. Edward Fraser also, the famous coloured Preacher, was converted at this epoch. His owner had removed in 1818 from Barbados to Bermuda ; here the youth came under the influence of Enoch

Matson and James Dunbar. The latter, discerning Fraser's latent gifts, made him leader of a Class of coloured members, and invited him to preach. Fraser and Cox were chief instruments in the building of the Methodist chapel at Warwick, which was finished in the year 1827, when Fraser was put into the ministry, being liberated by his master for the purpose. The raising up of men like these gave new self-respect to Bermudian Methodism.

A singular incident befalling in the winter of 1820-21 added another to the many ties of kindness linking Bermuda to the northern colonies. A Scottish Baptist Missionary of New Brunswick named Duncan Dunbar,<sup>1</sup> who had formed there an 'Evangelical Missionary Society' gathered out of various religious denominations, was returning from England accompanied by a Presbyterian Minister and other helpers enlisted for his Mission, when his ship, which had been driven about in the Atlantic disabled by storms for many weeks, put into St. George's harbour with her crew and passengers at the last extremity of exhaustion. The Methodist and Independent congregations acted the Good Samaritan to this forlorn company, by whose Gospel testimony they were themselves much edified, and sent them on their way with £60 (Bermudian) contributed out of their scanty means to the New Brunswick Mission.

The second ministry of Dunbar in Bermuda was followed by that of William Dowson, and after him of Roger Moore. Bermuda remained all this time a single station, and the Mission was precluded from extending its borders. The existing Societies increased under the care of these excellent Ministers, each of whom arrived from the Bahamas infirm in health. When Moore withdrew to England in 1828 the Bermuda Church numbered in all 122 members, of whom exactly half were Whites, 21 coloured folk, and 40 slaves. The reports of the troubles in Demerara and Barbados during 1823 and 1824 disturbed these islands and revived the odium against Methodism, but caused no further injury. Edward Fraser's influence by the year 1825 was very marked in his own neighbourhood; the masters became sensible of the worth of Christian slaves, and unanimously declined to sell them.

<sup>1</sup> This good man was not related by family to James Dunbar, a native of Durham county.

Chapels were built about this time for the slaves on two of the largest estates.

For many years the evangelization of the Bermudian Negroes had made small progress ; now the barriers were giving way. In consequence, the question of slave marriage became acute. At Bailey's Bay several negro couples were converted, and wished to join the Church. These were excluded because, though living together faithfully as man and wife, they were ineligible for marriage under the Bermudian law. The scandal and the wrong of the disability led to an agitation which resulted, after several years' delay, in legislative provision for slave wedlock.

The able and attractive James Horne succeeded to Roger Moore. His vigorous spirit gave a new impulse to the Bermudian Mission. In two years (1828-30) the Church membership increased from 122 to 200. The second Missionary, so long withheld, was now restored to the Circuit, and John Crofts took his place by Horne's side. The value of this reinforcement was discounted by Crofts' Chairmanship of the Bahamas District (in which Bermuda was included)—an office necessitating long absences from the Circuit. His health had flagged in the Bahamas ; this appointment retained him for the District, while it served the growing needs of Bermuda. The above arrangement, which involved the additional anomaly that Horne was Circuit Superintendent of his official superior in the Synod, was maintained for two years, but gave little satisfaction to the parties concerned, and ended in the separation of Bermuda from the Bahamas. James Horne returned to the Bahamas in 1832, leaving the direction of the Bermuda Mission to Crofts, who remained here till after Emancipation. Jonathan Edmondson, a Missionary of ten years' experience in the St. Vincent District, was designated as Crofts' assistant, but never reached Bermuda ; he was so much out of health that he sailed for England instead.<sup>1</sup> In 1833 the Bermuda Church, with ten preaching-places and six Societies, numbered 373 members, two-thirds of whom were free people. This proportion, the reverse of that prevailing in the West Indies

<sup>1</sup> Thomas H. Smith, already nominated for the ministry by the Bahamas Synod, was commandeered to fill the vacant place. Horne strongly complains of the Missionary Committee's delay in dealing with this nomination ; he states that Smith had been employed doing practically the work of a Missionary for three years in his native islands, without status or stipend. Edmondson returned to the West Indies after a year's furlough.

generally, held in the Bahamas also. To the preponderance of white folk in the District it was owing that its Societies advanced in numbers during the early thirties, while in other quarters the membership declined through the unsettlement of the negro mind and its preoccupation with the approaching day of liberty.

Horne's preaching in the Bermudas was attended by a revival—'Calm, steady, and clear,' he writes, 'as the starry canopy of the West Indian night'—such as these islands had not beheld since the days of Whitefield. In 1830 he says: 'Such a state of things I longed for, but never in my experience have I witnessed the like until now.' The Church membership was tripled during his four years' ministry, and the Bermuda Mission came at last to be counted successful. A number of young people afterwards eminent in the island Church were brought to God at this time. Amongst them was a youth named Benjamin F. Jenkins, who, removing a few years later to the States, entered the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church (South), to become one of its first pair of Missionaries to China, where he was long known and honoured as Dr. B. F. Jenkins. Thomas H. Smith, another of Horne's converts, volunteered for missionary work in his own Church. He preached the Gospel with fervour and power for years in the northern colonies, then for a longer period in the West Indian Districts, returning in 1851 to the North, where he laboured faithfully until his death more than twenty years later. The coming of the second Minister made possible the long delayed extension of Methodism throughout the Bermudas. New preaching-places were occupied and fresh Societies formed on islands where the Gospel had scarcely been heard. The Missionaries were loyally supported by the people in this advance, quite a vigorous corps of Local Preachers being now available for the Circuit plan.

The one trouble of Horne's administration presented itself at St. George's; it was of a nature rare in West Indian Methodism. Here Mr. Higgs resided; in the absence of the Minister, who lived at Hamilton while the Circuit had but a single Missionary, this gentleman, naturally enough, came to regard himself as supervisor of the St. George's Society; his zeal and ability, combined with his social position, gave him an unquestioned influence. Unfortunately, he based on this influence assumptions



which most of his fellow members would not allow;<sup>1</sup> party-feeling was engendered, and the Society dwindled and ceased to thrive. Resolved to end this state of things, Horne took personal charge of the work in St. George's and relieved Higgs of certain functions he had, with the best intentions, usurped. The good man resented this policy, which Horne claims to have carried out most considerately, and made things decidedly unpleasant for his Superintendent. But the end was gained, and St. George's Methodism recovered its tone. The situation was complicated when Mr. Crofts arrived; for he resided at St. George's, and formed an intimacy with the family of Mr. Horne's opponent which culminated in marriage with his daughter. The alliance led him to regard the question at issue from Mr. Higgs' point of view. Here was material for a pretty quarrel! The two Ministers were, however, good and sensible men, careful of the peace of the Church; they knew how to differ without anger and without hindrance to the work of God.

With the HAITI<sup>2</sup> Mission we complete our account of the beginnings of the Methodist Church in the West Indies. Second in size of the Greater Antilles, having an area about equal to that of Ireland, Haiti is second to none in the wealth of its soil. In its history and political aspect it differs wholly, and differs widely in natural features, from the other islands associated with it in this chapter, though closely adjoining the Bahamas. Discovered by Columbus on his first westward voyage in 1492, Hispaniola (*Little Spain*, as the occupiers named their new country) was the original seat of Spanish power across the Atlantic. Within hardly more than a generation, through the greed and cruelty of the colonists and the incapacity of the Government, the aborigines, numbering something like two millions, were totally destroyed. African slaves were then imported to supply labour for the mines and plantations of the indolent settlers. The children of these

<sup>1</sup> The contention between Mr. Higgs and his Superintendent broke out again some years after the departure of Horne and Crofts, when the former, taking offence, went over to the Anglican Church. But Richard Higgs was too convinced a Methodist to be happy in that Communion, and he returned before his death to the Church of his first love.

<sup>2</sup> Formerly spelt *Hayti*. This ancient designation of the island as named by the primitive Arawauks was restored when, in 1804, the negro insurgents established their *République d'Hayti*.

enforced immigrants for a century past have been masters in the land they entered as captives.

Possession of this rich island was disputed by the maritime rivals of Spain. In the middle of the seventeenth century a company of French buccaneers established themselves on the little island of Tortuga, and from this position gradually dominated the north-west coast of the mainland. At the Peace of Ryswick, made in 1697, Spain was compelled to cede to France the whole of Western Hispaniola, forming one-third of the island, to which the new owners gave the name of S. Domingue. Greatly valuing this acquisition, the French made numerous settlements upon it and actively developed its resources. The slave population was comparatively well managed, and multiplied under the French Crown. S. Domingue ranked amongst the most flourishing of European colonies ; it was known as '*le paradis des français.*'

The French Revolution had a powerful echo in Haiti. Trouble commenced there before the convulsion in France itself, through the effect of education upon coloured sons of planters sent by their fathers to be trained in French schools. These youths returned imbued with ideas of freedom and the rights of man which made their servile position at home intolerable. The protagonists and martyrs of the Haitian revolt were found amongst the educated mulatto young men of this class ; but when fighting began, the direction passed into the hands of more savage negro chiefs. With logical thoroughness the National Assembly at Paris decreed on February 14, 1794, the abolition of slavery and the equality of men throughout French dominions. In a few years the gift of freedom was revoked and slavery reimposed in the West Indian possessions ; but the Blacks of French Haiti, who numbered 600,000 or 700,000, had realized their strength, and would not be coerced. They found an heroic leader—as able a politician and soldier as the negro race has ever produced—in Toussaint L'Ouverture, who organized them into a fighting nation<sup>1</sup> during the first days of liberty. His plan was to establish a constitutional government in Haiti under the

<sup>1</sup> No national chief ever accomplished more in so short a time, with such raw material. His measures for the promotion of agriculture and industry were excellent, and began to take effect even within his lifetime. Toussaint L'Ouverture promised to be the *Moses* of his dark-skinned brethren ; the entire island acknowledged his rule. This negro liberator forms the subject of one of Wordsworth's finest sonnets.

suzerainty of France.<sup>1</sup> Entrapped by Napoleon's agents, Toussaint perished in a French dungeon ; but the war which ensued was carried by his lieutenants to a triumphant issue. After losing in a couple of years 50,000 men, half of whom fell a prey to disease, France desisted from the struggle. She was then at the height of her conflict under Napoleon Buonaparte with the rest of Europe. The restored French monarchy designed the recovery of Haiti, keeping the Haitians in alarm for twenty years ; in the end the Bourbon Government accepted a money indemnity<sup>2</sup> for the dispossession of the old proprietors as a solatium to its pride, and acknowledged the independence of the rebel State.

Early in the War of Liberation, when they counted on regaining their power, the white settlers committed frightful cruelties on former slaves who fell into their hands—wrongs avenged after the victory of the insurgents by a wholesale massacre of the French. The example of negro vengeance afforded by Haiti spread terror through the West Indies ; it accounts for the dread with which the faintest symptoms of negro insubordination were regarded. The exclusion of white people from the possession of land was made a corner-stone of the Haitian commonwealth ; this principle is maintained to the present day. Dessalines, the military leader of the rebels and the author of the massacre just referred to, was the first ruler of independent Haiti. He was crowned as ' Emperor of Haiti ' in October, 1804 ; his tyrannical habits resulted in his assassination two years later.

To Dessalines' power two Generals succeeded. Northern French Haiti gave its allegiance to Henri Christophe, a pure-blooded Negro of ruthless energy and natural ability, but quite uneducated, who reigned despotically under the title first of President and then of King (Henri I.), until his overthrow in 1820 ; the western and southern districts, including Port au Prince, the capital, elected Alexandre Pétion, a Creole gentleman of milder spirit and superior intelligence. Pétion endeavoured, with some success, to fill the rôle of a constitutional sovereign. He was proclaimed ' President

<sup>1</sup> Had Napoleon accepted Toussaint's overtures and allowed the Black Republic a reasonable measure of autonomy, there was no reason why Haiti should not have continued a part of the French Empire, under a control greatly needed to steady its political life.

<sup>2</sup> The large sum voted by the Haitian Assembly for this purpose was paid by instalments spread over a long term of years.

de la République Haitienne ' ; through successive re-elections he held his power until his death in 1818. The present Haitian State is the continuation of that which he founded. Much of Pétion's legislation was wise and well intended, but he lacked executive force. On Christophe's death the two divisions of French Haiti were reunited under President Boyer. The Methodist Mission was commenced in 1816 during the Presidency of Pétion, who treated the Missionaries with favour, hoping much for his people from the educational benefits of their work. He held enlightened views, and was sincerely attached to religious liberty.

When western Haiti was weakened by division at Dessalines' death in 1806, Spain recovered control of the larger eastern section, in which men of Spanish descent formed the majority. Fifteen years later, on the revolt of the South American colonies, Santo Domingo (as Spanish-speaking Haiti was now called, after the old Spanish capital) was wrenched from the mother country through the aid of a force furnished by the new State of Colombia ; the colonial administration of Spain had grown flagrantly corrupt and incompetent. But on the retirement of the foreign troops in 1822 President Boyer, who now commanded the reunited forces of French Haiti, invaded Spanish Haiti and re-annexed it to the western Republic. The two sections, however, failed to amalgamate, and at Boyer's overthrow Santo Domingo asserted its independence, establishing itself permanently as a separate Republic in 1844. Although the eastern State covers nearly two-thirds of the island, owning more than this proportion of its natural wealth, and while it boasts a large infusion of European blood, it has shown itself inferior in vigour and industry to its western neighbour. The population of Santo Domingo, estimated to-day at 600,000, is less than a third in number, and its foreign trade less than half its value, of that of the Haitian State. Both countries during recent years have come through financial obligations under the oversight of the United States, which is likely to make for the stability hitherto lacking in their affairs.

The sanguinary struggle attending its birth gave to the Haitian Republic a military cast from the beginning. The rivalries of the insurgent leaders, the continued fear of invasion from France, and the ambition of the western chiefs to dominate the whole island, combined to foster the militarism which has



been the bane of the country. Pétion was succeeded in the Haitian Presidency by Jean Pierre Boyer, an astute and clever man, but inferior, both in character and intelligence, to his predecessor. Boyer held his seat for a quarter of a century (1818-43), to be overthrown at last by a military conspiracy which his arbitrary rule provoked. Revolutions of this nature became chronic from the fall of Boyer onward, the idle army being a hotbed of discontent and intrigue. For seventy years the history of Haiti has been one of civil war, punctuated by assassinations and massacres and accompanied by destruction of property and neglect of all the useful ends of government. The powerful negro Soulouque established order in 1849, when he proclaimed himself Emperor, to be deposed and banished nine years later; Salomon, who was President from 1876 to 1886, suffered the like fate; other chiefs of the State succumbed to their rivals more quickly.

The sister Republic has fared no better. Weary of the struggles for the Presidential Chair, and despairing of self-government, the Santo Dominicans in 1861 invited Spain to reassume direction of the country. Three years of the old administration were enough—the Spanish Governor was expelled and the burden of Home Rule taken up again, with no better success than heretofore. The sovereignty was offered to the United States, only to be declined. The longest interval of tranquillity this luckless country has enjoyed it owed to the negro Ulises Heureaux, who played the autocrat with the ability of a born statesman from 1882 to 1897. Since his assassination in the latter year, the train of futile revolutions has been resumed.

The failure of the Republics of Haiti is not chargeable to the incapacity of the negro race; indeed, the more European Santo Domingo has proved the greater failure of the two. Its causes are moral and historical. The original settlement and the times of Spanish rule bequeathed traditions of blood and horror which cleave to the soil. The instant transition from abject slavery to proprietorship was intoxicating; the negro voters and freeholders had received no sort of training for citizenship. Obsessed by ignorance and superstition, they were the prey of blind impulse and of the basest demagoguery. The marvel is that out of such a *milieu* men like Toussaint L'Ouverture and Pétion and Heureaux should have emerged.

Perpetual strife prevented the popular education and progress in civil arts and aptitudes for which the above-named leaders sought to provide ; the few enlightened minds and patriotic spirits were overborne by the brutalized multitude—slaves still in understanding and tastes—at whose arbitrament power was dispensed. But the radical cause of the rottenness of the Haitian State has been the viciousness of social life. For generations the slaves had propagated their kind like animals, with scarcely a notion of sexual morality ; their masters deemed them unworthy of regular marriage, and by their unbridled libertinage set them the worst example. Alike in French and Spanish Haiti before the Revolution family life had sunk to the lowest level ever witnessed in Christendom.

For this extreme degeneration the Roman Church must bear a chief part of the blame. In the earlier days of Hispaniola she had colonial priests such as Bartholomew Las Casas, who lifted up their voice with strength against slavery and moral corruption ; but these men were foiled by political influences, and by the apathy or interested hostility of ecclesiastical rulers ; they had no successors. Beyond the administration of baptism and the practice of Church ceremonies, which the Negro mixed up in the grossest manner with his hereditary paganism, the Roman priesthood during the two hundred and fifty years of its exclusive possession of the Haitian field did almost nothing to Christianize the Negroes.

Voodooism—a more developed form of the Obeahism imported from West Africa—was the real religion of vast numbers of the slaves, practised in secret with horrid and obscene rites. The Haitian type of sorcery and fetishism manifested cannibal traits, in evidence during recent years, which have witnessed a strange revival of Voodoo magic and superstition.<sup>1</sup> The deeply debasing Animism prevalent in Haiti the Roman Mission failed to combat ; long before the era of independence the priests in general had given up the task of converting the Negroes ; they practically accepted the current view of the Whites—that they were brutes in human shape, and outside the scope of Christianity.

The Revolution for the time greatly impaired the Church's power in Haiti. Romanism nominally remained the State

<sup>1</sup> A small green snake, common in Haiti and bearing the name of ' Voodoo,' is idolized as a symbol of the hidden nature-powers which are worshipped by the devotees of this creed.

religion, but communication with Rome was cut off. Church property and funds were taken over by Government. Each commune (or parish) elected its own priest, and no ecclesiastical interference from without was permitted. Naturally it became a case of 'like priest, like people'; so long as the parson kept on good terms with his parishioners he lived as he listed, and the majority chose the easy way. Haiti became a resort for the scum of the European priesthood; the licence of its clergy was proverbial.<sup>1</sup> The Concordat with Rome, drawn up thirty years later, brought about an improvement in clerical discipline; in its train came also a systematic propaganda against Protestantism in the island.

Nowhere in the world was there a greater need for the Gospel of the grace of God; scarcely anywhere was the attempt to convey it more adventurous and doubtful in the issue. The attempt began in 1816, but not till eighteen years later did the Methodist Missionary come to stay in Haiti. The date of the British Emancipation happens therefore to form an era for Methodism in the island, though the French Revolution had brought freedom to the Haitian Negroes forty years earlier. A certain Methodist, Captain Reynolds, who on his voyages looked out for opportunities to serve Christ's kingdom, turned the attention of the Missionary Committee toward Haiti. This indication came at the moment when the Missionary Society had been started in England to take up and extend Thomas Coke's work; larger funds were becoming available for foreign enterprise, and the missionary leaders were in quest of fresh fields. Haiti stood in the forefront of Negrodom—the first Black Republic in history; it lay near to islands in which the Mission was successfully planted. While its liberal form of government promised freedom of operation, the spiritual condition of the people was pitiable; to win them for Christ would mean much for Christianity amongst the black race. Captain Reynolds reported his interview with President Pétion, from whom he brought a virtual invitation to the Wesleyan Mission, producing at the same time a written assurance given by the Haitian Secretary of State that no hindrance would be

<sup>1</sup> The misconduct of the Roman clergy was described in a printed address issued by the Haitian Secretary of State in the following terms: 'The priests . . . gave themselves to all sorts of abominations, betraying both the paternal Government which affords them protection and the Almighty Himself, whose Ministers they are!' See Bird's *The Black Man*, pp. 178, 179.

put in the way of a well-conducted Protestant Mission. Pétion realized his people's need of education, and greatly desired help from England in this cause.<sup>1</sup> Amongst the first steps the Missionaries took on settling at Port au Prince early in 1817 was the establishment of a public School; in this effort they had the open support of the head of the State. Replying to the address they presented to him on arrival, Pétion enunciated the striking sentence, 'L'éducation élève l'homme à la dignité de son être'; his action was in keeping with this sentiment.

But Pétion's untimely death in March, 1818, cut short hopes too largely founded upon the sympathy and liberality of one man. The next Haitian chief of the State was of a different type and swayed by other influences:

Bigotry had been pent up [writes Bird]<sup>2</sup> by the power and patronage of the former President, whose views on religious liberty, as well as on the moral wants of his people, had been very much in advance of those of his successor.

In the first instance, however, Boyer, the new President, treated the Missionaries courteously, and encouraged them to persevere, concluding the letter of approbation, written by his own hand in June, 1818, with the declaration that the Government desired them to take 'les mesures les plus efficaces pour l'accomplissement de vos entreprises louables.' Thus reassured, Brown and Catts wrote to the London Committee urging the appointment of a third Missionary—a man of experience he should be, and well acquainted with French. So sanguine were they that they thought it worth while to invite Charles Cook to this field from his important work in France. Brown added to the joint letter a note intimating that, in his view, the success of the Mission to Haiti turned (humanly speaking) on the efficiency of *the school*. This institution would commend the Gospel to the ruling class like nothing else; it would raise up strong friends for Methodism amongst the scholars; and it might serve to aid the funds of the Society.

<sup>1</sup> His ruder rival, Christophe, in various ways showed himself zealous in the same direction, and had decided English leanings; but he did not come into touch with Methodism.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Black Man, or Haytian Independence*, by Mark B. Bird (New York, 1869), p. 124. This work, written by a Missionary who had lived nearly thirty years among the Haitians and knew them thoroughly, while it does not spare their faults, shows a remarkable confidence in their native capacity, and the strong hope that a Black Republic, regenerated by the Gospel of Christ and informed by education, will grow into self-respect and prosperity.



The above letter had scarcely reached its destination when a storm arose which wrecked the Missionaries' plans and drove them from the island. On first acquaintance Catts had judged the people to be 'not very bigoted; lovers of liberty,' he wrote, 'they are therefore advocates of liberty of conscience.'<sup>1</sup> Such professions, doubtless, were often on the lips of Haitian politicians who affected advanced European views; but liberty without the sense of justice and the love of order is a synonym for popular caprice. In November, 1818, a sudden fury of persecution burst forth, the whole city of Port au Prince, as it appeared, rising against the Methodists. The immediate occasion of the outbreak was the act of a young man, who, in a fit of madness, cut his mother's throat, and who was known to have attended Methodist public services. The unhappy youth had no connexion with the Society nor intimacy with the Preachers; for many weeks before his crime he had not been seen in the congregation. A strain of insanity in his family record sufficiently accounted for what had happened. Nevertheless the cry was raised by enemies of the Mission, and taken up by a populace already suspicious of the white visitors and their propaganda, that the Methodists had driven the young man mad! Absurd and inflammatory reports of their preaching passed from mouth to mouth. The Missionaries waked up to the fact that unawares they had become an object of violent antipathy to the majority of the citizens at Port au Prince. They could not pass through the streets without a military escort. The meeting-house had its doors and windows smashed; the congregation was dispersed; insult and outrage were showered on members of the little Church who ventured abroad.

President Boyer was absent at the beginning of the attack; he apologized to the victims, but declared himself powerless to alter the popular sentiment, and advised retirement till the storm abated. Soon it became evident that policy lay behind the anti-Methodist demonstrations.<sup>2</sup> Early in 1819 the

<sup>1</sup> Liberty of conscience and of worship was expressly secured by an Article in the Constitution of 1804, on which the Republic was founded.

<sup>2</sup> The address delivered in a principal Roman Catholic church on January 16, 1820, by the priest who was (it was stated in the *Missionary Notices*) the prime instigator of the campaign against Methodism, discloses its inspiration: 'All the faithful are hereby warned that the Methodist religion, which is now in this city, is a bad religion; he or she who follows it shall never see the face of God, but shall be eternally delivered up to the damnation of hell. . . . Meetings are held in divers places in this

Government made a proclamation recognizing the Roman faith as the religion of Haiti and prohibiting other forms of public worship ; but the Constitutional Article of 1804, declaring freedom of conscience as a principle of the Republic, remained unrepealed. Both Pétion and Christophe had been protectors of religious liberty ; Boyer's administration encouraged the Romeward reaction, which proved a cause contributory to his ultimate downfall. The President played a double part ; smiling in the first instance on the Methodist undertaking which his predecessor and the liberal party had favoured, he prepared its destruction. With bland politeness he recommended Brown and Catts to withdraw peaceably, since their Mission had become impracticable ; his request was a veiled command.<sup>1</sup> The Government took over the School, which under native management soon came to nought. The Missionaries saw that they had no option ; they quitted Haiti amid the lamentations of their flock, who (according to Bird's account) urged their departure, distressed by the insults and threats hurled against them.

The handful of Methodists in Port au Prince and the neighbourhood showed wonderful constancy ; most of them were imprisoned, some heavily fined ; they were assaulted on the highways, their houses broken into, their business stopped ; mockery and injury were their daily portion. ' Heretical ' religious assemblies of all kinds were forbidden ; the Methodists could only communicate by secret visits to each other's houses ; but they kept the light shining and the fire burning that was kindled amongst them. In course of time their steadfastness wore out the persecution ; the popular rage died down, or found other objects. For nine years the little Church in Haiti—the product of a few harassed months of missionary labour—subsisted without a Minister ; its membership actually grew from 36 to 90 during that period. Haiti affords a conspicuous instance of the vitality of Methodism.

city ; but woe unto him who joins them, for it is an abomination. . . . They are a people to be despised. Let not the faithful have any communion with them. It is a religion destructive to mankind ; it is impossible it should take root in this Republic. It is necessary that it should be exterminated.' Thus *Roma locuta est* ; in Haiti, in Ireland, in Spain, wherever she dares to speak aloud, such is her voice.

<sup>1</sup> Boyer wrote a letter of thanks and regret to the Missionary Committee, enclosing a sum of £500 granted by way of compensation. His conduct in the whole affair is perplexing. The view here suggested is that most consonant with his general character. He was a man of policy rather than principle, and possessed little or none of Pétion's concern for the improvement of the people.

The Haiti pioneers were carefully selected. John Brown entered the ministry in 1807, and was a man of experience; James Catts began his work on this field. Both had a working knowledge of French, and readily picked up the Creole *patois*. Catts had been trained in pedagogy, and organized the Port au Prince School with promptitude and ability. Brown was a man of particularly amiable and solid character; the burden of preaching and pastoral care rested upon him. Returning home in 1819, the latter laboured with acceptance in English Circuits, fulfilling a ministry of sixty years. Catts was transferred from Haiti to the Antigua District, whence he also retired to England four years later. After about twenty years' service in the home work he became a Supernumerary, but 'ceased to be recognized' as a Minister in 1849. He was a bright, energetic man, and acquitted himself well on the Mission Field.

Scarcely had Port au Prince been occupied when an opening presented itself at Cape Haitien,<sup>1</sup> the rival capital of French Haiti and the town of chief magnitude in the north-west of the island. The Missionary Committee without delay appointed a couple of Preachers to this important centre—Elliott Jones and William Woodis Harvey. Much was expected from these vigorous young men, but they were invalided in turn within a few months of landing (in the year 1819–20), before they had learnt the Creole speech or got into touch with the people. Jones resorted for health to the States; Harvey returned to England. His illness continuing, Jones followed his colleague to the mother country, where both retired from the ministry through loss of health. The Cape Haitien enterprise started at an unfavourable juncture. The two western Republics were at war, and the power of the King (or Emperor), Henri I (Christophe), who gave the Missionaries an encouraging reception,<sup>2</sup> was waning; the disturbances had commenced

<sup>1</sup> This place is designated 'Cape Henry' in the official Stations, and figures under that name till 1835, when as 'Cape Haitien' it is associated with the Station of Port au Plaat.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Limonade ('King Henri' formed a nobility of imposing titles, aping the style of European Courts) addressed a letter to the Missionary Committee expressing the King's pleasure at the coming of Messrs. Jones and Harvey. 'His Majesty,' the Duke writes, 'renders homage to the principles of the Christian morality and of humanity which the Committee professes; and all the good which his friends Messrs. Wilberforce and Clarkson have told him respecting the Society suffices to acquire for it his esteem and veneration.' It looks as though the introduction of Methodism into Cape Haitien was due to William Wilberforce. The anti-slavery philanthropist watched with lively interest the experiments in negro self-government going on in Haiti:

which ended in his dethronement and suicide (1820). The continuance of the Mission, thus arrested in its incipient stage, was found impossible; a short time previously the Port au Prince Missionaries had been compelled to beat a retreat. The two Stations continued to stand on the *Minutes*, with the words 'Vacant for the present' attached to them, until Port au Prince was reoccupied in 1825 and Cape Haitien in 1835. The Missionary Society could not give up Haiti; it still awaits the justification of its hopes. It would have been more prudent to postpone the occupation of a second post in Haiti until a secure footing was gained for the first; but hardly any one in England at that date had apprehended the extreme insecurity attaching to Haitian affairs.

In reporting the withdrawal of himself and his colleague, Brown writes to the Committee:

We left in Society 30 approved members, and 18 on trial, under the care of two young men, the fruit of the Mission. . . . We gave them plans for meeting in Class, holding prayer-meetings, and meeting for reading and repeating the Catechism; so that there exists still in the capital of the Republic of Haiti a regularly organized Methodist Society, proceeding according to the Methodist plan.<sup>1</sup> Nor can I abandon all hope in future; for when I consider how many Bibles, New Testaments, religious tracts, and other books of piety have recently been put into circulation, how many sermons we delivered and conversations we held, how many anti-Christian errors and absurdities have been canvassed and exposed, how the reigning vices of the place have been attacked and condemned, and what a spirit of inquiry was in consequence excited, I am persuaded light has gone forth, and hope we shall yet see a greater and more effectual door opened amongst that unhappy people for the publication of the Gospel.

John Brown lived to see his anticipation realized in a good degree.

The perseverance of their converts was the best testimony to the genuineness of Brown and Catts' work. J. C. Pressoir (or Preçoir), one of Brown's two faithful delegates,<sup>2</sup> relates in writing to his friend in 1823, while the hue-and-cry after Methodism continued unabated, that 32 of its innocent folk were incarcerated and treated as vile malefactors, for no other crime than coming together to edify and comfort one another. Pressoir, who somehow escaped imprisonment with the rest, conveyed a letter to the President from the company, and

<sup>1</sup> Once more, let us observe, the Class-meeting was the salvation of the Methodist Church.

<sup>2</sup> *Evariste* was the name of the other of these excellent young men.



appealed in person to His Excellency on their behalf. While complaining of 'their fanaticism' and their disobedience to the laws of worship, Boyer appeared to be surprised at the severity of the sentence inflicted on them, and ordered their release; it would have been odious to bring them to public trial, and, with all his time-serving, Boyer had some humanity and respect for justice. Occasional acts of mob-violence continued for years. Though protection was promised, it was never adequate, and heretics were often at the mercy of their tormentors—men were whipped, women dragged out of their dwellings; one Methodist house was completely demolished. For all this, when Bauduy came to England in 1824 he reported 88 members in Society, divided into six Classes, 'most of whom were walking worthily of their high calling in Christ Jesus.' Truly this was a case of 'the bush' which 'flourished unconsumed in fire!'

Amongst the earliest Port au Prince Class-leaders was Madame Bauduy, a lady of colour, whose house was a rendezvous for the Methodists of the town; her name figures with honour in the letters of this period. She had a son, St. Denis Bauduy, who listened intelligently to the teaching of the Missionaries Brown and Catts—'delighted,' as he says, 'to see men whom I understood'; two months after their departure the truth penetrated from his head into his heart, and he was converted to God. Young Bauduy threw himself ardently into the cause of Methodism, and was a valuable ally to Evariste and Pressoir. Soon he also began to employ his talent in exhortation; the reports of his ability and success were so high in commendation that the Missionary Committee invited him to England for better instruction in theology and in the ways of Methodism, with a view to his regular employment in the work of the Gospel. Bauduy came accordingly; for nearly four years he was under the direction of the Missionary Secretaries, and commended himself by his good behaviour and diligence in study. During part of this time he exercised his French by preaching in the Channel Islands. By the year 1828 the persecution in western Haiti was mitigated; the Methodists had won a measure of tolerance through their patience and purity of life.

Bauduy was now sent back to Port au Prince, and put in charge of the Society there under the title of 'Assistant

Missionary.' The Haiti Mission was thus formally reopened. For seven years Bauduy remained the only Wesleyan Minister on the island. His letters to England during this period breathe a touching simplicity; he showed himself an earnest, faithful evangelist, and faced persecution without flinching. Bauduy was a man of gentle spirit and winning disposition, but he was not endowed with organizing ability or gifts of leadership. He might have achieved much more under a strong Superintendent; probably his 'colour' told against him with the black Haitians.<sup>1</sup> The Society remained at the end of his sole pastorate—in point of numbers—where he found it, and its institutions were scarcely more developed. The Methodists were still harassed and kept under disabilities; Boyer's government, within the bounds of legal propriety, was steadily unfavourable. But they rarely suffered now from open violence, and public feeling towards them was comparatively indulgent.

St. Denis Bauduy remained in the ministry till 1861; he rendered, first and last, thirty-five years of devoted service to the cause of the Gospel in his native isle. With the appointment of John Tindall in 1834 a new era opened for Haitian Methodism.

<sup>1</sup> Jealousy between the full Negroes and the coloured minority, who were generally superior in intelligence and wealth, but often inferior in energy and force of character, formed a principal factor in the chronic feuds of Haiti. The black folk commonly paid more respect to a white man than to one of mixed blood.

## VIII

### THE CONTINENTAL MISSIONS PRIOR TO EMANCIPATION

British Guiana—Its Peoples—The Indian Problem—A Negro Missionary—A Foiled Attempt—Thomas Talboys—Violent Opposition—John Mortier—Victims of Yellow Fever—Orders in Council—An unhappy Misunderstanding—The Trial of John Smith—Action of Parliament—John Mortier's Return—Church Membership in 1829. Honduras—Logwood and Mahogany—Spanish Elements—Thomas Wilkinson: Pioneer—Belize—Early Death of Missionaries—William Wedlock—The Mosquito Shore—James Pilley and James Edney.

WEST INDIAN METHODISM at an early time overflowed into the two neighbouring British colonies, spreading to Guiana to the south of the islands and to Honduras westwards. During recent times the Isthmus of Panama and the adjoining shore of Costa Rica have been occupied, in consequence of immigration from the islands of negro labourers. The stations last named are associated with the Jamaica District, as in the first instance were those of Honduras. The work in British Guiana was an offshoot of that carried on in the old Antigua and St. Vincent Districts.

Dating from the establishment of British power in the country at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Mission in British Guiana for long bore the name of DEMERARA, this being the region where it was originally planted.<sup>1</sup> Guiana includes the whole enclave between the rivers Orinoco and Amazon, and is divided into Venezuelan, British, Dutch, French, and Brazilian Guiana—provinces succeeding one another along the north-east front of South America in a direction running from north-west to south-east. British Guiana, with a coastline of near 300 miles in length, and stretching into the interior for upwards of 400 miles, is a country of boundless tropical wealth, the merest fraction of which is as yet developed, and

<sup>1</sup> Demerara was in the first place the name of the river (Spanish *Rio de Mirara*, *Wonderful River*), transferred to the district through which it runs. Similarly, the colonies to the west and east of Demerara were named *Essequibo* and *Berbice*, after the streams on whose banks they were founded. The river-system is the commanding feature of the terrain of Guiana.

possessing extensive mineral resources<sup>1</sup>; lying about 5° north of the equator, it covers an area somewhat larger than that of Great Britain. With a fertile soil and copious rainfall, the country is intersected by a network of rivers which are navigable for small craft far within the hinterland. Behind the alluvial and swampy coast-belt, from which Guiana derives its epithet of 'the land of mud,' stretches a range of dense forest abounding in valuable timber. At the back of the woodlands the country opens into broad savannas suitable for grazing, and slopes upwards to heights reaching at some points over 8,000 feet. It is a region marked by an extraordinary variety of climatic conditions and natural productions.\*

The human population, at the present time exceeding 300,000, is similarly various. Four chief elements, of widely different race, go to form the constituency. The European inhabitants in 1904 were estimated at nearly 16,000, two-thirds of these being of Portuguese descent. There are about 30,000 of mixed blood, mainly white and negro by origin. One hundred and twenty thousand of the people are pure Negroes, descendants of the slaves imported in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In addition, for the last sixty years there has been a steady importation of East Indian labourers, the majority of whom have settled in the country; by this time they outnumber the Blacks. In virtue of their industry and adaptability, the East Indians promise to become the predominant factor in this colony. A smaller contingent of Chinamen are found amongst the coolies and petty traders. In the interior, scattered through the forests and over the mountains, there roam troops of South American Indians of various tribes, akin to the Aborigines of the islands.<sup>2</sup> Some few of these have been reached by Christianity and civilization;

<sup>1</sup> The fabled El Dorado, which lured Sir Walter Raleigh and his fellow voyagers, lay in this direction, on the waters of the upper Orinoco. Gold is now extracted in the colony to the yearly value of about £250,000, and there is a productive diamond-field on the banks of the River Mazaruma.

<sup>2</sup> Being near the equator, Guiana has an equably warm climate. The intense heat of the low-lying coast-lands is tempered by the Atlantic trade-winds, and the endemic malaria has been of late years reduced by cultivation and drainage. The hilly and mountainous interior supplies healthy situations, and bears a sub-tropical vegetation. The earthquakes and hurricanes so often desolating the West Indian Islands are here unknown.

<sup>3</sup> Amongst them the Arawauks and Caribs, whom Columbus found peopling the West Indies, are still to be traced; a variety of other tribes are distinguished on the mainland. The Native Indians wander freely in the wild and half-explored hinterland across the borders of the several States, evading the census, so that it is only possible to guess at their numbers.



but the bulk of the surviving Natives, estimated at 6,500 in number (formerly much more numerous), live as hunters and fishermen, retreating before the approach of the white man and retaining their old animistic heathenism. Here and there are found clans of mixed black and brown race, the offspring of runaway negro slaves of former times who escaped to the forests and mingled with the Aborigines. There are also settlements in the woods of 'Bush Negroes,' originally formed by fugitives from slavery who reverted to a wild life, but remained separate from the Indians.

The problem of the Christianization of Guiana is highly complicated. The Europeans from the beginning have been in great need of spiritual ministrations; they are generally accessible through the English tongue. Beside the planters of the colony, the traders and the professional men go to form a community, constantly growing in wealth and importance, which supplies a contingent—small indeed, but invaluable—of earnest Christian men and missionary helpers. The classes last-mentioned are particularly strong in Georgetown, the capital, situated at the mouth of the Demerara River—a city of 50,000 people, which far exceeds in size, and surpasses in civic progress, any other town in the British West Indies.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the Portuguese are Roman Catholics by profession. The character of the Europeans, and their relations to the black and brown labourers, resemble those prevailing on the islands, except that in British Guiana there is greater prosperity, and all classes live in comparative comfort; education is more accessible than in most of the islands, and the non-whites, of all shades of colour, have better opportunities of rising.

Amongst the Negroes and Creoles the London Missionary Society (which was first in the field) and the Methodist Society have proceeded, before and since the Emancipation of 1834, on lines corresponding to those pursued elsewhere and with similar success; the great majority of the Methodist Societies, from the first days until now, have been drawn from this stratum. The influx into America of East Indian coolies—mostly Tamil-speakers of South India—constitutes a new and very difficult missionary task which presents itself simultaneously

<sup>1</sup> New Amsterdam, on the banks of the River Berbice, with a population of 7,500, is the only other notable town of the colony. In addition to these two municipalities, there are in the colony about twenty 'incorporated villages' with their civic councils, and ten other 'country districts.'

on the opposite side of the world amongst the Pacific islanders. This problem created by the spread of Asiatic heathenism in lands exploited by European colonization, will, before long, in one shape or another, confront Christianity throughout the tropics. Hinduism has taken firm root in South America,<sup>1</sup> and exhibits here the tenacity of its closely knit social system and its subtle philosophical principles. We shall describe in Chapter XII. the attempts Methodism has made to cope with the invasion ; it must be confessed that the measures taken by the Churches to meet this world-movement of racial and industrial life up to this time have proved far from adequate.

The Dutch were the first to colonize the region known as British Guiana.<sup>2</sup> Early in the seventeenth century they planted and fortified trading posts at the mouths of the principal rivers, clearing land around them for cultivation. About the same time a handful of English settlers from Barbados fixed themselves at Surinam, in what is now Dutch Guiana. The latter colony was growing fast when in 1667, under the Treaty of Breda, Surinam was handed over to Holland in exchange for New York. For upwards of a century Great Britain had no footing in South America ; but in 1781, when Holland, allied with France, took part against her in the war with the American colonies, the Dutch West Indies, including the Guiana shore, were occupied by British forces ; these possessions were restored at the Peace of 1783. Thirteen years later Holland was forced into alliance with Revolutionary France ; on this occasion Guiana was recaptured by the British, to be a second time delivered back, at the Peace of Amiens in 1802. On the resumption of the war with Napoleon the American Dutch colonies passed into British hands for the third time. From this date (1803) the three districts of Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice were permanently held by the captors, whose possession was confirmed by the Treaty of Vienna in 1814, while Surinam and the adjoining section of Guiana reverted to Holland. Most of the Dutch settlers removed from the territory now declared British to the newly defined Dutch Guiana. In the year 1831 the three colonies included in British Guiana,

<sup>1</sup> Indian Moslems are also found amongst the immigrants, and mosques are springing up in the country alongside the Hindu temples.

<sup>2</sup> Abortive Spanish and French descents had previously been made on the same coast.

by this date brought through their gradual enlargement into continuity, were consolidated under a single administration, with Georgetown, which is centrally situated on the coast, for its capital.<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1802, about the time of definite British occupation, that a couple of freed Negroes, who had been converted years earlier in Nevis under the preaching of Dr. Coke and Thomas Owens, came to Demerara seeking employment. Claxton, the foremost of the two, according to his own account underwent several relapses after his conversion ; but he was an energetic and outspoken man, with a good measure of intelligence and initiative. He and his companion soon after their arrival began testifying from house to house among the Blacks, and formed a small Methodist Society. They reported their work through letter to Dr. Coke, and the opening presented by the new colonies.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing the importance of the opportunity, Coke directed John Hawkshaw, an active young Missionary who had laboured with approval for several years in the West Indies, to make trial of Georgetown. Referring to his action, Coke writes :

A conviction that many hundreds were wandering as sheep without a shepherd inclined me to attempt the establishment of a mission among them ; and Mr. John Hawkshaw was appointed to make the first essay.

Previously to this Claxton had once been silenced by the British authorities, but appears to have regained his liberty to preach under the condition that he should not infringe upon Church hours. The Missionary arrived on September 30, 1805. He had letters of introduction to several of the colonists, who received him hospitably and promised their support. But the Governor of Demerara had somehow taken alarm ; when Hawkshaw presented himself, with his letters and credentials, asking permission to commence his work, and particularly to instruct the slaves in Christianity, Governor Beaujon peremptorily ordered him to quit the colony by the vessel which brought him ! Explanations and protests were in vain ; within

<sup>1</sup> *Stabroek* was the earlier Dutch name for this town.

<sup>2</sup> Others appear to have importuned Coke on behalf of British Guiana, including a Mrs. J. Clifton, who in a recent visit to England called upon him, and who opened her house to Mr. Hawkshaw when he arrived. Several planters and merchants coming from the West Indies on the British occupation settled here, who had been acquainted with Methodist work elsewhere and were favourable to it.

two or three days of landing Hawkshaw was on his way back to Barbados.<sup>1</sup>

This discomfiture left Claxton under a cloud, and we hear nothing more of his Society for some time. In the year of the abolition of the slave trade the London Mission took up the task of evangelization at the invitation of a pious planter of the name of Post.<sup>2</sup> John Wray was sent out as its pioneer, and settled in the neighbourhood of Georgetown. Claxton and his companions joined Wray's Church; the former acknowledged much benefit and stimulus received from his ministry. After a while, however, finding their Methodist principles at variance with those of the Minister,<sup>3</sup> Claxton and Powell resumed their independent work. This time they were more successful than before, notwithstanding the persecution they suffered.<sup>4</sup> A Methodist Society, numbering at one time seventy persons, was formed under their leadership.

Renewed applications were made to Dr. Coke and the British Conference, which resulted in the appointment of Thomas Talboys as Missionary to Demerara in 1814. This second endeavour to reach British Guiana, which was almost the last act of Thomas Coke's General Superintendency, happily succeeded. The London Mission was vigorously and usefully at work in the colony; but there was abundant room for Methodism alongside of it; its ministrations failed to meet the needs of many whose hearts were inclined to the Gospel. Thomas Talboys, the soldier-preacher of Trinidad, secured a footing at Georgetown without much trouble. The new Governor (Murray) was no friend of Dissent, nor of negro

<sup>1</sup> An excuse may be found for the arbitrary and intolerant action of Beaujon in the fact that British possession was as yet precarious, and he was resolved to exclude every possible element of disturbance.

<sup>2</sup> Beaujon was now no longer Governor.

<sup>3</sup> The early Missionaries of this Society were, in most instances, Calvinists in doctrine; on this ground, it seems likely, the dissension arose.

<sup>4</sup> In 1811 the local Government enforced a statute resembling the Sunset-Sunrise Law enacted in Bermuda and elsewhere, designed to prevent the slaves attending public worship. On its proclamation John Wray instantly sailed to England, where he represented the case to the Colonial Office with such effect that within six months the Demerara Act was overruled by the Crown, the hours of assembling for worship being extended for slaves to five in the morning and to nine at night on Sundays, and on week-days fixed as between seven and nine p.m. On Governor Bentinck's attempting to set aside these instructions he was recalled in the following year. See Lovett's *History of the L.M.S.*, Vol. II, chap. xiii. These occurrences, doubtless encouraged the new attempt of the W.M.M. Society upon Demerara.



Missions<sup>1</sup>; had he dared, he would have given to Talboys as short a shrift as Beaujon gave to Hawkshaw; but the fate of Governor Bentinck was before his eyes. On Talboys' application for licence, the Missionary was bluntly told that he 'was not wanted,' and warned that 'the people were much prejudiced against Dissenters—especially the Methodists!' However, after he had read the new-comer's credentials, which included a letter of recommendation from the Governor of St. Bartholomew, Governor Murray allowed him to settle at Georgetown, under a licence from the Colonial Fiscal (or Secretary) certifying him as entitled to officiate in the colony. Talboys was a man whose bearing and address were a certificate in themselves. Before many months had elapsed a tolerable building was secured at the suburb of Werk-en-Rust for the Missionary's work; here the Society of 71 persons—38 men and 33 women—fixed its home. Through Talboys' winning and stirring ministrations the Church in a short time was multiplied five-fold. In 1816 Demerara reports to the Conference a Church membership of 364; of these, 6 only were Whites. Talboys writes to the Missionary Committee that he 'has entered upon a large field and a pleasing prospect.'

Angered at the Missionary's popularity with the Negroes, the white mob of Georgetown repeatedly besieged his house, threatening his life. The persecution was aggravated in 1816 through the circulation of the anti-missionary pamphlet, written in vindication of the slave-holders<sup>2</sup> by Captain Marryat, Member of Parliament and Political Agent for the West Indies. Much of the material of this scurrilous and inflammatory publication had been obtained from Demerara, some of the most injurious statements reflecting pointedly upon Mr. Talboys.<sup>3</sup> The colonists were given to understand that this old soldier of the Crown preached sedition to the slaves; it was insinuated that he prompted them to steal fowls and other provisions for the use of his own table! Seeing these slanders down in print, and affirmed on the authority of a Member of

<sup>1</sup> Murray's predecessor, Carmichael, who followed Bentinck, had recently died. Carmichael was an open-minded man, who appreciated the work of the London Society's Mission and saw that it had fair play. His death was a misfortune for the colony. Governor Murray, at his reception of the London Missionary, John Smith, on his arrival three years later, warned him: 'If ever you teach a Negro to read and I hear of it, I will banish you from the colony immediately.'

<sup>2</sup> This publication elicited a powerful reply from Richard Watson.

<sup>3</sup> For some unknown reason the writer appears to have had a violent spite against Talboys.

Parliament, Demerara society accepted them wholesale ; the town and colony blazed with indignation. For three months the Methodist premises were incessantly beset ; gates and windows were smashed and furniture destroyed ; a hail of stones poured on the dwellers in the Mission-house, whose lives were defended by a bodyguard of their faithful coloured people, headed by William Claxton. During many days Mr. Talboys was unable to show his face ; for months he durst not go abroad at night for fear of assassination.

So great was the alarm against the Methodists that the Governor summoned Talboys to answer for the appearance on the Connexional Quarterly Ticket of the text : 'The kingdom of God suffereth violence,' observing that 'this was a mysterious thing to him, and appeared like a rallying-sign for the slaves.' 'We dare not,' says Talboys, 'use some passages of Scripture in the pulpit such as : "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."' At this time the slaves of the colony were perfectly quiet ; the whole hubbub was occasioned by Marryat's disgraceful brochure. Spite of all, 'the word of God grew and prevailed.' The Missionary was deeply touched by the devotion of his flock in this crisis. 'Never,' he writes, 'did I meet with a people more grateful to God for the blessings of the Gospel.'

John Mortier had been designated to assist Talboys. The latter withdrew from Demerara soon after his colleague's arrival in 1817 ; his endurance had been at the utmost stretch for many months. With his departure the more violent disturbances ceased. Mortier finds at Georgetown a 'commodious chapel, well filled,' the 'congregation consisting chiefly of coloured persons and Blacks. A few white men sometimes pay us a visit for the purpose,' he says, 'of laughing and loud talking. The magistrates, however, promise protection.' Slaves flocked in from the surrounding country to the Methodist preaching, despite the hindrances thrown in their way by ill-disposed masters. Up to this time few openings were available for visiting them on the plantations. The overcrowded state of the chapel necessitated the erection of a deep gallery, which was carried out when Mortier took charge of affairs. The addition endangered the stability of the fabric, and a new sanctuary was required. Such undertakings were rendered difficult and costly by the entire lack of building-stone in

Demerara ; wooden buildings of any size in this climate rapidly decayed and needed perpetual repairs. The new Georgetown chapel was at length completed in 1821.

Beside his other difficulties, Mortier found the isolation from his fellow Missionaries a great disadvantage. When in 1818 he set out to attend the annual assembly, he was compelled to make three distinct voyages. First he sailed from Georgetown to Barbados, thence to St. Vincent, hoping to reach Antigua<sup>1</sup> from the latter island. Before he could accomplish the last stage of the journey the Synod had closed its sessions ! By this time he had spent £31 in travelling expenses, only to miss his engagement, gaining but the satisfaction of supplying a brother's place for several weeks in the pulpits of St. Vincent.

Matthew Moss Thackwray assisted Mortier for three years in Demerara. This young man 'ran well' at the outset, but before probation ended came under an act of discipline which compelled his leaving the ministry. Thackwray broke ground for the Mission amongst a large and neglected population at Mahaica, the coast-town at the mouth of the river of that name, which runs parallel to the Demerara some 30 miles eastwards. Amidst much opposition Thackwray secured a suitable building to house his congregation, and in course of time Mahaica became the second Circuit-centre of Methodism in the province.

The planters were incurably jealous of the attraction of the Gospel for their slaves. For a time, moreover, in outlying places the work was obstructed and scandal occasioned by some of the agents of the London Society, who claimed rights of preoccupation, where there was only too much need for all the help forthcoming, and disparaged their Methodist fellow workers. The painfulness of this contention was acutely felt by the struggling Methodist itinerants while it lasted.

Mortier and Thackwray were followed upon the ground in the course of the years 1819-21 by George Bellamy and William Ames. These excellent and devoted men fell in succession victims to yellow fever during the epidemic of

<sup>1</sup> At this date the whole of the West Indian Circuits, excepting those of Jamaica and the Bahamas, were embraced in the Antigua District. When, soon after, a partition was made between Antigua (Leeward) and St. Vincent (Windward), Demerara was included in the latter section. Communication with Barbados was comparatively easy.

autumn 1821.<sup>1</sup> Ames was particularly successful for the few months of his labour at Mahaica, where he 'watched over the Society with extraordinary faithfulness and diligence.' In 1822, eight years from its foundation, the Demerara Mission reported a Church membership of 1,322, all but ten of whom were Negroes or coloured folk. This growth was amongst the most rapid, and yet amongst the soundest, realized in any West Indian Circuit. It was furthered by the inflow of immigrants from the islands, amongst whom were found not a few stray Methodists, who supplied rallying-points for the Societies in their new environment. So the process of assimilation, beginning with Claxton and Powell in the first instance, continued to operate in the growing colony of Demerara.

The year 1823 witnessed a crisis in the affairs of British Guiana, marked by tragical incidents, and which had far-reaching effects. While the London Mission bore the brunt of the conflict, and John Smith of that service was its martyr hero,<sup>2</sup> the sister Mission was intimately affected thereby. Mortier had by this time returned to Georgetown, taking the place of the lamented George Bellamy. James Cheeswright was his colleague at Mahaica. The Demerara troubles of 1823 originated in the agitation against slavery, now becoming intense in the mother country. In March of that year William Wilberforce published a powerful *Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire* upon this subject. The formation of the Anti-Slavery Society ensued, with Thomas Fowell Buxton for its Vice-President, who succeeded Wilberforce as leader of the Liberationists. Buxton moved in the House of Commons on May 15, 1823, a resolution proposing the gradual abolition of slavery throughout the British colonies as being a system 'repugnant to the principles of the British Constitution and of the Christian religion.' This drastic sentence was averted for the time by the Minister Canning, who carried in the House a string of amendments in favour of ameliorative measures, to be framed with a view 'to prepare

<sup>1</sup> William James Shrewsbury went across from Trinidad to fill the vacancy created by this terrible bereavement, and superintended the Demerara Circuit for six months. His rare gifts of leadership and pastoral sympathy proved invaluable in this emergency.

<sup>2</sup> See *The History of the L.M. Society*, by R. Lovett, Vol. II., chapter xv., 'The Missionary Martyr'; also *The Demerara Martyr*, by E. A. Wallbridge (1848).



the slave population' for ultimate 'participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of His Majesty's subjects.' The vote adopting Canning's programme sounded the death-knell of slavery in the Empire. A circular letter was at once addressed by the Colonial Office in London to the Governors abroad conveying the above resolutions of Parliament ; in the case of the Crown colonies, of which Demerara was one, Orders in Council were dispatched at the same time which limited the hours of labour to nine *per diem*, and absolutely prohibited the flogging of female slaves.

In the neighbouring Berbice the Governor announced the above Orders without delay, and desired the resident Missionary to explain it to the Negroes. This was done, and everything passed off quietly. Governor Murray at Georgetown unwisely withheld the dispatch from the public, though he talked about it in the hearing of his black servants. Plantation-managers in different quarters, to whom the news had filtered, did the same. A course better calculated to breed mischief could not be imagined. The snatches of angry conversation overheard, and magnified by repetition, grew into a rumour, which spread swiftly through the colony, that the King had ordered the slaves to be freed and the Governor was keeping back the message !<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Smith, on being appealed to, told the Negroes that they were mistaken in supposing that freedom had been granted, but said that 'something was come for their good,' and advised patience, therefore, until the Governor should see fit to make known this fact.

Still Governor Murray kept silence ; and as weeks passed the excitement amongst the slaves grew irrepressible. A number of them held a meeting on Sunday, August 17, at which it was resolved to 'down tools' on the evening of the next day until the King's pleasure should be known. The two leaders of this movement belonged, as it happened, to Mr. Smith's congregation at Resouvenir, the head quarters of the London Mission near Georgetown ; but he was quite unaware of their action ; his advice had been wholly in the direction of patience and submission to the law. On hearing of the resolution of Sunday night, the majority of the slaves prepared to act upon it, snatching up weapons where they could to use in self-defence.

<sup>1</sup> Compare the course of events in Jamaica ten years later.

Information of these doings reached the police in the course of Monday, and measures were taken to repress disorder. Riding out with a troop of horse in the afternoon, the Governor met a party of armed Negroes, with whom he held parley; to them he announced, for the first time, the terms of the King's Order. Naturally they were suspicious, and refused to surrender; one of them even fired upon the Governor! The black people swarmed at nightfall round the houses of the masters, shouting for 'the guns and our rights'! Though they secured a quantity of weapons, they had little skill to use them and less discipline in arms. Smith and his friends offered their services to the Government, proposing to go about amongst the rioters and endeavour to bring them to reason, but their help was roughly refused; many of the officials believed the Missionaries to be at the bottom of the conspiracy. So far, indeed, were the insurgents ruled by influences from this quarter that they declared, 'We will take no life'; prisoners who fell into their hands suffered no worse injury than confinement in the stocks.

By Tuesday, the 19th, the colonial militia and the few British troops along the coast had been got together; they found themselves confronted by thousands of Negroes miscellaneously armed and making a ridiculous imitation of military order. Before attacking, the British Commander asked the rebels what they wanted; after reciting other complaints, the negro spokesman said: 'We hear for true that the great Buckra at home (the King) give us our freedom for true.' In the end the military fired on the rabble, of whom they shot down nearly two hundred without the loss of a single life on their own side. The insurgents were scattered by these volleys, and the pitiful rebellion was crushed. A scene of cowardly vengeance followed. 'Many prisoners were wantonly shot by the militia for mere sport'; the Colonel in command 'stood upon no ceremony as to trial, no less than twenty-three being done to death by his sole authority.' For five months martial law continued in force, although the military danger was over in a few hours. Floggings and hangings were the order of the day, until in May of the next year, when fifty prisoners still remained under sentence of death, the savage proceedings were stopped by peremptory orders from home. The story is an example—such as magisterial and military doings in

Jamaica just before Emancipation supply upon a larger scale—of the frightfulness and calculated brutality to which the enemies of liberty are prone to resort.

In the course of the above punitive measures, John Smith was arrested and brought before the Georgetown Courtmartial upon two principal charges: (1) of having incited the slaves to rebellion by his preaching, and (2) of having concealed from the Government knowledge of the approaching insurrection which was in his possession. After a trial lasting over a month, in which attempts were made to suborn evidence against him from negro prisoners, the accused was found guilty. He was sentenced *to be hanged*—and yet was recommended to mercy! The verdict stultified itself. As Henry Brougham said, when subsequently the action of the Demerara Government was reviewed in the House of Commons: 'If they (Smith's triers) had dared to take this innocent man's life, they must *themselves* have died the death of the murderer!' The trial ended; Mr. Smith, who was in bad health to begin with and had suffered imprisonment already for two months, was removed to the common gaol, where, in spite of medical protests, he was lodged in an unwholesome cell. On the part of the authorities responsible this was, in view of the prisoner's condition, nothing else than another—slower—way of carrying out the death sentence. In vain Mr. Smith's friends, including the clergyman of Georgetown,<sup>1</sup> who suffered much for espousing the cause of an innocent man, endeavoured to procure an alleviation of his treatment<sup>2</sup>; only when in a dying state was the sick man removed from the pestiferous chamber in which he lay. He expired on February 6, 1824. The spite of his traducers followed their victim after death; his wife and friends were not permitted to bury him, nor was it allowed them to mark out his grave. Three days after John Smith's death instructions arrived for his immediate conveyance to London in order for his retrial, and for the supersession of Governor Murray.

On the arrival in England of detailed information a political

<sup>1</sup> This generous-minded and brotherly Christian Minister, the Rev. Mr. Austin, wrote to a correspondent in England while Smith's case was pending, asserting that his friend's preaching had in fact 'prevented a dreadful effusion of blood' and had probably been the means of 'saving the lives of those very persons who were now seeking his life!'

<sup>2</sup> One regrets to see an *ex parte* and misleading account of this affair adopted in the article on *Guisana* which appeared in the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

storm broke out, which raged for several months. The champions of slavery pointed to the Demerara rebellion in evidence of the dangers of the Liberation policy ; so strong was the pressure brought to bear on the home Government that it even contemplated throwing overboard Canning's decisive resolutions of the year before. On the other side, meetings of protest against the Demerara murders were held all over England, and two hundred petitions for the revision of the sentence upon John Smith were presented to Parliament within eleven days.<sup>1</sup> On June 1 Mr. Brougham moved in the House of Commons that a humble address be presented to His Majesty calling attention to ' the unexampled proceedings ' lately witnessed in Demerara and ' the violation of law and justice ' which had taken place, and declaring the necessity for measures which should secure ' a just and humane administration of law in that colony,' such as ' might protect the voluntary instructors of the Negroes, as well as the rest of His Majesty's subjects, from oppression.' Canning moved ' the previous question,' which was carried, after a long and heated discussion, in a divided House. This debate was the occasion of the last speech made by the venerable Wilberforce before the House of Commons, in which he pleaded passionately for justice to the wronged and freedom for the shamefully oppressed. The motion of the Liberationists failed of its immediate object. ' The stigma,' writes Lovett, ' still remained upon the dead Missionary ; but the debate killed slavery in the British dominions.' It was a moral victory for the party defeated in the division-lobby ; another nail was driven into the coffin of negro slavery.

Meanwhile in Georgetown demonstrations of the opposite character were taking place. Governor Murray and Colonel Leaby were fêted and honoured as saviours of the colony. In February, shortly after Smith's death, a public meeting of the Whites was called in expression of their resolve ' to resist by every authorized means the establishment of sectaries in the colony.' A petition was addressed to the Court of Policy

<sup>1</sup> The Government, without waiting for Smith's arrival, reviewed his trial on the strength of the papers forwarded from Georgetown, and condemned him to be excluded from British Guiana and the West Indies as a person dangerous to public peace. There the matter ended so far as British law was concerned. Now that he was dead, and when the debate of June 1 in the House of Commons had secured for Mr. Smith a moral vindication, his friends did not consider it wise to reopen the question of his innocence ; the sentence against John Smith stands unrepealed in the legal records of Demerara.



(the legislative body of Demerara) for the 'expulsion of all Missionaries' at present in the colony and the exclusion of 'any missionary Preachers for the future.' These slave-holding sons of Britain had unlearned the elementary principles of British liberty and toleration. The above assembly, which passed in all twenty-five resolutions, suggested to the Court of Policy the planting of endowed clergy in the several districts of the colony at the expense of the local proprietors, so that provision for religious teaching might be made and the intrusion of the Missionaries rendered superfluous. The latter recommendations were carried into effect. Before long Demerara was furnished with seven Anglican and five Scottish (Presbyterian) Ministers, distributed through the twelve parishes into which the colony was now divided.<sup>1</sup> Thus the ecclesiastical system was introduced which has continued in Demerara ever since. The colonial legislature seized the Bethel Chapel in which Smith was accustomed to preach, the property of the London Missionary Society, and assigned it to one of the incoming clergymen. The proposals for excluding the 'sectarian' Preachers fell to the ground; it was useless to press them against the prejudices of the British public and an adverse House of Commons.

We have dwelt on the Demerara Negro rising and the death of John Smith because these events, while not entering directly into the history of Wesleyan Missions, affected their course and the advance of religious liberty through the whole field. The mild insurrection of the slaves in Demerara awakened the fears and stirred the cruel passions of West Indian slaveholders everywhere. The measures of suppression they adopted revealed in a startling light the temper of the white oligarchy and its utter incompatibility with the principles of British justice; the tide of indignation and horror against

<sup>1</sup> How little the Church establishment thus settled in British Guiana did to meet the wants of the country or to preclude the need for other spiritual agencies is shown by the testimony of a competent witness, resident in the colony, which was given a quarter of a century after its inauguration: 'The hatred of the planters to the Missionaries arises from the latter mingling more with the Negroes and taking a greater part in their concerns than the stationary clergy did. Little beyond what may arise from the fulfilment of the commonplace routine of duty in the parish church is to be expected from four-fifths of the benefited clergy in the West Indies. . . . A very small proportion of Europeans pay even an outward regard to the decencies of religion by attendance at public worship, while in too many cases they are addicted to the grosser forms of immorality. With respect to the lower orders of the people, the great bulk of those who profess any regard for religion attend either the Missionary (L.M.S.) or the Wesleyan places of worship' (quoted in Lovett's *History of the L.M.S.*, Vol. II., p. 357).

the oppressors of the Negro, now rising fast in England, was stimulated by this disclosure. The Georgetown tragedy exasperated the conflict between liberal and Christian sentiment on the one hand, and the West Indian plutocracy, and the commercial interests blindly allied with it, on the other; the struggle was precipitated toward its inevitable issue. John Smith died a faithful martyr to the cause of that Gospel which 'proclaims release to the captive and the recovering of sight to the blind.' All Christian Missions to the enslaved negro race have been gainers by his sacrifice.

The greatly trusted and judicious John Mortier returned to Demerara as Superintendent in 1822; he guarded and nursed the infant Church through the times of disturbance with the utmost care, and had the satisfaction of reporting to the home Committee that out of the 1,216 Church members under his oversight but two were even suspected of complicity in the rebellion. He remained at Georgetown for two years, returning later for a year in 1833, and being appointed in 1836 the first Chairman of the Demerara District, in which office he continued for seven years. Mortier spent in the colony nearly half his diligent and richly useful ministry of thirty-six years. To none of its early Missionaries did Demerara Methodism owe quite so large a debt of gratitude as to him. He was effectively supported at Mahaica by James Cheeswright. In hardly any other part of the West Indian field had so much good been accomplished amongst the Negroes up to this time, with so little countenance or encouragement from masters and managers. It was not till 1822 that the Mahaican Preacher obtained licence from the Governor and his work was placed under legal protection.

Joseph Fletcher succeeded to Cheeswright's post in 1825, and remained on the Circuit four years, being Superintendent for half this term. From 1826 to 1828 Jonathan Edmondson ministered at Mahaica; he then assumed for a year the superintendency at Georgetown. These two Ministers raised the Mission to a high degree of prosperity; 'their names,' wrote Mortier later, 'are written in the hearts of the people, and will ever be remembered by them in love.' In 1827 the Circuit membership had grown to 2,004—a third of the total in the St. Vincent District; the bulk of these were slaves; there were but 17 white persons in Society, and 154 free Blacks and coloured folk. A third Missionary was granted to Demerara,

two now residing in the town and one in the country eastwards. Mahaica continued to prove a fruitful soil. Edmondson writes from this village in August, 1826, describing the painful inadequacy of the chapel, which 'is attended by Negroes from twenty-four estates,' and could scarcely contain the existing Society if present in full force. 'No one man,' he continues, 'can do justice to the congregations and Societies in their present state, however willing, diligent, and laborious he may be.' Services at the outlying stations were equally thronged.

The troubles of 1823 had proved the Missionary to be the Negro's friend; the bond of gratitude and confidence thus created drew the black people to his feet, and greatly made for the furtherance of the Gospel. The anticipation of the coming freedom now widely entertained by the Negroes, of whom some of the most intelligent and aspiring were found in British Guiana, stimulated their craving for instruction. At the same time the proprietors, with scarcely an exception, vetoed their education; schools were everywhere discouraged. Fletcher writes concerning his side of the Circuit a little later that there is 'a glorious field, white unto harvest,' along the west coast. He believes that in this direction 'hundreds of old accredited members' from the islands to the north might be recovered, if the Mission staff were adequate for proper itinerancy and the country plantations were accessible. In many parts of British Guiana the masters were invincibly prejudiced; the events of 1823 left in their minds a lasting apprehension as to the results of Christian teaching amongst the Blacks.

In 1829 the Demerara Circuit reached what remained for long its high-water mark of prosperity, numbering 2,744 Church members. A fourth Missionary was allocated to the Circuit in the following year, to reside in its eastern (Mahaica) portion. Richard Hornabrook was the first to appear in this capacity; with one year's interval this model Missionary laboured for seven years onward in Demerara. During the most anxious and difficult times of the Mission he was a centre of peace and strength. The partition between the two halves was not made till 1834—an unfortunate postponement, for the Mission had grown unwieldy and the detailed reference of Mahaican affairs to Georgetown—at a distance of thirty

miles, and with defective means of communication—caused delays and misunderstandings.

This was particularly apparent during the collegueship of Moses Rayner and Edward Grieves—an ill-yoked pair, who were both highly strung and suffered from the effect of climate upon the temper. The senior Missionary—the Chairman of the District, and honoured for the services he had rendered on former stations—in the decline of his health fell into eccentricities embarrassing to his work ; he contracted a kind of mania for building alterations, which involved the Society at Georgetown in much damage and expense. When Mortier in 1832 came to replace Rayner, he found Church affairs in sad confusion, and speaks of his predecessor's conduct as 'inexplicable' ; the case was probably one of brain-trouble and temporary mental failure. Grieves was not the man to 'suffer gladly' the infirmities of his ecclesiastical superior, and denounced him unsparingly. Rayner threatened his colleague with a Minor Synod ; the Church was scandalized and distracted by their differences, which ended with Rayner's sudden return to England in 1832 and Grieves' unexpected death at Mahaica in the following year. The latter, notwithstanding the sharpness of temper which detracted from his exceptional force and earnestness, was a valuable Missionary ; his premature death was greatly deplored. Thomas Lofthouse had been Grieves' predecessor at Mahaica, where he laboured for three years of his probation (1828-31) ; the greater part of his West Indian ministry of forty years (1827-67) was given to the Bahamas. Lofthouse was eminently a man of peace, who by 'faithfulness and brotherly kindness secured affection and confidence' on all hands. He wore well in his Master's service, bearing the burden and heat of his long day of missionary toil steadfastly and with uniform efficiency.

The declension in the Demerara Mission, which lost more than a thousand Church members between 1829 and 1835, was due in large part to the distraction caused amongst the slaves by the near approach of Emancipation. It was only in Jamaica, through the folly of the masters, that the excitement broke out in civil disorder ; but it powerfully affected the black folk everywhere, and diverted the thoughts of all but the most sober and spiritually disposed from every other subject. Hence in all these Circuits and Districts whose



Church constituency was mainly drawn from the servile population a temporary shrinkage took place. The heaviest decrease, however, occurred here in the year 1832-33, when the troubles connected with Moses Rayner's administration culminated. Next year the Circuit was divided, and in two years after that Demerara and Barbados were parted off from St. Vincent to form a District by themselves.<sup>1</sup> So a new chapter opened in the history of Methodism in British Guiana.

The HONDURAS Mission was the last new undertaking of principal importance in the West Indian field on which Methodism embarked before the date of Emancipation. A letter addressed to the Mission House by a Mr. Jeckel (or Jekyll), an English Methodist settled in business at Belize, awakened the interest of the Missionary Committee in British Honduras. This gentleman had gathered around him a little company of piously disposed fellow countrymen alive to the religious needs of the community in which they lived. A small Baptist congregation worshipped in Belize; but Methodists were excluded from the sacraments of this Church, which, moreover, they found wanting in sympathy with their missionary views. The letter described the spiritual destitution and moral disorder of Honduras; at the same time it reported the way open for the Gospel, and assured the Committee that a zealous Missionary would find great opportunities there. Mr. Jeckel promised on behalf of himself and his friends hearty co-operation and substantial support. The applicants, it was evident, were not simply aiming to secure a pastor for themselves.

This colony originated with companies of English buccaneers infesting Spanish commerce during the seventeenth century, who took shelter amongst the numerous small islands (Cays) fringing the coast of Honduras, and formed more or less permanent settlements upon them. These were joined by pearl-fishers, seeking the treasures of the neighbouring seas. The adventurers discovered the peculiar value of the timber growing on the adjacent mainland, and many of them took to wood-cutting. The eighteenth century had not far advanced before a great trade in logwood and mahogany, mostly in British hands, sprang up along the coast of the Yucatan

<sup>1</sup> In 1844 the separated Districts were reunited under the name of 'St. Vincent and Demerara.' They continued so until 1863, when Demerara was partitioned off by itself, Barbados remaining attached to St. Vincent.

peninsula. This lucrative employment attracted lumbermen and merchants from the British Isles, with a sprinkling of Europeans of other countries—landsmen, of a very different type from the sea-roving pioneers. To provide the necessary labour negro slaves were imported by purchase from the West Indian Islands. Fortified posts were established at the river-mouths, and expeditions of wood-cutters were sent up the rivers, on which the precious timber, as it was felled, was floated down to be shipped for Europe. The business was carried on without permission given or sought upon territory belonging to Spain, over which the Spanish Government, however, exercised no effective control; the trespassers in their excursions met only with scanty tribes of wandering Indians. Repeatedly the Spanish Americans attempted to break up these establishments and drive out the intruders; unaided by their own Government, the British held their ground, sometimes making successful counter-attacks, and gradually extending their operations along the eastern coast of Yucatan. Belize, at the mouth of the river of that name,<sup>1</sup> became the centre of the trade in mahogany and a British port of considerable size.

In the Treaty of 1763 Spain acknowledged the rights of the settlers to trade and to hew timber in the disputed localities, and admitted British civil jurisdiction amongst them, stipulating that all fortifications in the settlements should be razed, and that no agricultural colonies should be planted, while the Spanish sovereignty was formally admitted; the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 enlarged the forest-area open to the wood-cutters. Subsequent conflicts established British power more firmly in Honduras; after the rebellion of Spanish America in the twenties of last century Great Britain claimed full sovereignty.

By successive agreements with the neighbouring Republics, the last of which is dated 1859, the present boundaries were fixed, extending the colony for 250 miles along the coast, from a little south of latitude 16 degrees to some distance north of 18 degrees N. and about 70 miles inland at the widest. To the continental area a multitude of bordering islands are

<sup>1</sup> In this case the river has been designated after the town. *Belize* (or *Belice*) is said to be a Spanish corruption of *Wallace*, the name of a captain of freebooters renowned in these parts, who made himself obnoxious to the Spaniards. This old corsair is the eponymous hero of British Honduras.

added, some of tolerable size. The total surface of British Honduras is, approximately, 7,560 square miles—a little larger than that of Wales; its population is slightly above 40,000, of whom but a thousand or two are of pure white extraction. The prevalent malaria of the coast makes against English colonization; the hinterland is elevated and has a wholesome air<sup>1</sup>; much of it is richly fertile; when opened up and accessible, it should offer a fine field for immigration. The geographer Reclus, writing thirty years ago, says:

Although within an eighteen days' voyage of England, the interior of Belize is less known than that of Central Africa. Yet few regions abound more in natural resources of all kinds. One of the remarkable peculiarities of the climate and soil is that almost all the tropical products of commercial value may be grown in the same zone.

The colony has been hitherto valued for little else than its timber, but of recent years the people have taken to fruit-growing for export; they are discovering the rare and manifold fertility of their soil.

The 40,000 folk of British Honduras form one of the most heterogeneous communities in the world. The large Asiatic infusion of British Guiana is wanting here; in its stead, the Spanish-Indian (Mestizo) breed of Central America predominates.

At least six distinct racial types may be traced [says the writer in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article 'British Honduras']: (1) the Native Indians, found chiefly in forest villages in the west or north interior; (2) descendants of the English buccaneers, mixed with Scottish and German traders; (3) the wood-cutting 'Belize Creoles,' of more or less pure descent from African Negroes imported from the West Indies; (4) the Caribs of the southern districts, descendants of the population deported in 1796 from St. Vincent, who were of mixed African and Carib origin<sup>2</sup>; (5) a mixed population in the south, of Spanish-Indian origin, from Guatemala and Honduras<sup>3</sup>; and (6) in the north another Spanish-Indian group, which came from Guatemala.

The Methodist Mission has appealed mainly to Groups 2, 3, and 4 in the above list. The people of Groups 1, 5, and 6 speak

<sup>1</sup> The country, generally speaking, is sub-tropical rather than tropical in climate.

<sup>2</sup> The aboriginal Caribs of the islands were a branch of the continental American-Indian stock.

<sup>3</sup> Many political refugees of kindred blood are met with in the towns, to whom the British colony afforded an asylum during the civil wars and revolutions which have been chronic in Central America.

a Spanish *patois* ; their religion, nominally at least, is Roman Catholic. The backwoods Indians retain much of their indigenous Animism.

A country with such a history, a population so thrown together and commingled, was not likely to present a high social order or material readily amenable to Christian teaching.<sup>1</sup> Missionary work has proved slow and difficult in Honduras ; vice and irreligion still prevail. The fact that so late as 1914 34 per cent. of the births registered in the colony were illegitimate tells a sad tale. Little impression has hitherto been made by any Protestant agency upon its Indian and Spanish-Indian Natives, who form a part of the general population of Spanish America. To them British-Christian ideas and methods, like the English speech, are foreign.

The nine years antecedent to 1834 barely sufficed for the first planting of the Gospel in British Honduras. Jeckel's letter, above noted, reached the Methodist Missionary Secretaries in November, 1824 ; the Committee promised to ' comply with the request as soon as possible.' Strangely enough, the provision of a sanatorium ' for the brethren in Jamaica ' is named in their resolution amongst the reasons for occupying the new station—Jamaica itself afforded far better health resorts than any forthcoming in Honduras. The speedy death in succession of the two Missionaries earliest appointed to this coast was a melancholy irony on that part of the Committee's plan.

Thomas Wilkinson, the first of these pioneers, landed at Belize toward the end of 1825 ; he is designated in the *Minutes* of that year for ' Honduras Bay.' The hearty reception given him by Mr. Jeckel and his associates bore out the terms of the letter on the strength of which he had been sent. Beside Jeckel, Messrs. Rees and John Armstrong were conspicuous among the welcomers. The Committee instructed Wilkinson not to fix himself in the town, but to itinerate along the river, seeking out the wood-cutters' camps and evangelizing the Negroes remote from the means of grace. He endeavoured to follow these directions, but several considerations compelled him to give attention to Belize. In the first place the fact that, although other Churches (Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist)

<sup>1</sup> The Christianity of the conquerors of the sixteenth century has, to a great extent, *sterilized* the soil of Spanish America for the purer seed of the Gospel.



were in existence there, ungodliness was rampant ; at the same time, Wilkinson found a goodly number of Belize people eager for his preaching ; there was evidence of a demand as well as a need for the Gospel in this town. Further, he soon perceived that it was impossible to carry on an effective visitation of the up-river country without a base in Belize, which was the centre of communication and activity throughout the colony.

In laying his plans, under the advice of his friends at Belize, Wilkinson was confronted, therefore, with the necessity of securing, to begin with, a *pied-à-terre* at Belize. With this desire he purchased, on the credit of the Missionary Society, a property offered him which could be adapted to serve for chapel and Preacher's house. This outlay—of £490—was incurred on his own responsibility, without the sanction of the London Committee being previously obtained. The breach of discipline justly brought upon Wilkinson a severe censure, and the bill drawn on the treasury for the above amount was dishonoured. But the authorities so far relented as to advance upon interest to Belize trustees £300, to be refunded in seven years. The young Missionary had fallen into the snare which, in spite of the repeated warnings addressed to them on the subject, so frequently entangled his West Indian brethren. However, the purchase turned out a good investment for the Mission ; in the end the Committee approved their agent's policy, which he ought to have submitted to them before acting upon.

Thomas Wilkinson did not live long enough to vindicate the course he had taken. He wrote a long and interesting letter to the Committee about six months after his arrival (June, 1826), describing his journey of 150 miles up the Belize River, made in company with Mr. Armstrong early in that year, on which, in the course of three weeks' travelling, availing himself of every opportunity, he had preached to about 300 Negroes found in the gangs of mahogany-cutters encountered along the banks. Manifestly a great expenditure in time and cost was necessary to reach in such fashion the handfuls of hewers of wood dispersed over a great stretch of country, whereas nearly all these people resorted to Belize at intervals,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The floating of the logs downstream of itself necessitated the coming of many of the lumbermen, both Whites and Negroes, to town.

and would be likely to hear the Gospel there if a ministry attractive to them were maintained at that centre, and if the Missionary could make friends with them by occasional visits to the lumber-camps. The wiser plan evidently was to provide a suitable chapel of good size at head quarters, to build up there a strong Society (of which the nucleus already existed), and in addition to make systematic tours amongst the lumbermen inland. For the double task two Missionaries were necessary at the outset ; one must be always in residence at Belize.

Wilkinson found the employers and managers of the up-country wood-cutting establishments uniformly hospitable, and some of them likely to prove abiding friends. The John Armstrong's Company, and the introductions brought from Belize, were passports everywhere. These were in general a better sort of Britishers than those employed on the island plantations, and the slaves working in their service were in many cases picked men, manlier and more intelligent than the average field Negro. Wilkinson met with some of the heathen Indians in the forest, and was moved with pity at their condition. He returned from his reconnoitring expedition well satisfied with the prospects of his work, and full of plans for the future.

After three months' preaching and visiting he had gathered in Belize, at the time of writing, a Society of 30 people, 'earnestly seeking the salvation of God' ; several of these had entered into 'the liberty of God's children.' A Sunday School was commenced in the first preaching-room. Messrs. Jeckel and Rees assisted zealously in the conduct of prayer-meetings ; the preaching devolved entirely on the Minister. 'I hope shortly to have a chapel built to seat about 500 people,'<sup>1</sup> the writer adds ; he has the promise of liberal subscriptions from gentlemen of the town toward the erection. Wilkinson cheerfully testifies at this time to his good health and happiness in his work.

Fourteen months from the date of the above letter this valuable man was snatched away from his labours, in his thirty-second

<sup>1</sup> It was his eagerness to secure this chapel which brought Wilkinson into trouble with the Committee. At the end of his letter he speaks of 'calculating the expenses' of the erection, as though he contemplated sending an estimate home. Circumstances of which we are not aware must have precipitated his action, which took the Committee entirely by surprise.

year and the fifth of his ministry, falling a victim at Belize to malignant fever. He left behind him, as the Missionary Committee records, 'a character of the highest order for industry, integrity, and piety.' The confidence and esteem which Thomas Wilkinson inspired amongst his friends at Belize were unqualified; their admiration was shared by many outside Methodism. For this, the first year in which a return is available, 39 Church members were registered in the Honduras Bay Circuit; 15 of these were slaves, 22 free Blacks or coloured people; 2 Whites only are counted in the number. In 1828, when the station had been unoccupied for half a year and the Society beset by persecution, it was reduced to 12 souls.

By the close of 1827 a new Missionary was found for Belize in the person of Thomas Johnston. This gifted young man, who sailed from England at the end of November along with St. Denis Bauduy, returning to Haiti, was able barely to give six months of service to the Mission Field; on June 14, 1828, he finished his course. From the letter of Mr. Armstrong announcing the melancholy event it appears that Johnston made a wonderful impression within this brief period. 'He never preached,' writes the informant, 'without the chapel being crowded.' Men hitherto strangers to public worship were found listening with reverence in his congregation; magistrates and military officers frequented the Methodist chapel. The building, whose dimensions were 60ft. by 40ft., became so overcrowded that its enlargement was immediately necessary.

There was never anything like Mr. Johnston's ministry in this country before; he seemed to cause a general desire for religion to prevail through every description of our community.

Armstrong greatly deplored this ardent Minister's disregard of his health. The malady which brought him to the grave came on by gradual approaches, and might, seemingly, have been cured had the patient given his overwrought frame a chance of recovery. But he could not rest with appointments unfulfilled, and the need of so many souls crying to him.

The sad story of the opening of the Honduras Mission illustrates the danger of sending out solitary Missionaries to new stations,

especially if unseasoned to the climate ; the more devoted and self-forgetting the man, the greater is the hazard involved. Had Wilkinson and Johnston been sent to Belize *together* instead of singly, both would probably have lived ; in combination they would, in all human likelihood, have accomplished a mighty work. Our Lord's rule of *two and two* for missionary expeditions is not disregarded with impunity. The double appointment would have involved delay and a greater initial expense ; it would surely have proved economical in the long run.

After a second interval of bereavement for the Belize Church William Wedlock and his wife arrived to take charge of the Mission, in March, 1829. The Committee determined this time to send a married Missionary. Wedlock reports the Society as numbering 20, none but free men being included in this return. The vacancy in the pastorate had deprived the slaves of the care of the Church.

The popularity of Thomas Johnston's preaching was not a thing to be repeated, but the new Minister proved a diligent and capable successor ; he had the advantage of his wife's help, who gave a much-needed supervision to the women and girls of the Belize congregation. Before the year ended Wedlock reports 100 scholars present at Sunday School and six male teachers enlisted. The congregations are good—crowded on Sunday nights ; the question of enlarging the chapel has again been raised. By this time the Methodist chapel has become a conspicuous place of Sunday resort. Wedlock notes the appearance there on one occasion of a Spanish Marquis attended by other refugees of distinction from the bordering Republic ; at another time of the Dutch Consul from Guatemala. But conversions hitherto are rare—hearers are interested without being spiritually awakened. The Missionary finds some gratification in being able to give a serious turn to *funerals*, which, he says, 'in this country are commonly occasions of merriment and profanity !'

Due southwards from Cape Gracias-à-Dios, in latitude 15 degrees N., the Mosquito Shore stretches in a long line to beyond latitude 12 degrees N. From Belize it is separated by the whole breadth of the Gulf, and by the State of (Spanish) Honduras beyond that—a distance of roughly 400 miles. For nearly two centuries this strip of land was under British



protection ; attempts were made, with poor success, to settle English colonists upon it. In 1850 Great Britain renounced her long-established claims to the Mosquito<sup>1</sup> Shore, finally handing over her jurisdiction to Nicaragua.

The occupation of British Honduras appeared to open the way for Methodism to this other region of Central America, to which the attention of the Missionary Committee had been drawn for some time. Distressing accounts reached England of the condition of the Indians in this quarter, who remained in their heathen degradation, little touched by European influences. In the main the Misskitos were self-governing ; they had a king of their own, recognized by the British authorities ; they lived chiefly by fishing and the chase. The stream of Spanish conquest had turned aside from this coast. Romanism, which barred the way of the Methodist Missionary in other parts of Central America, was scarcely in evidence here. It was resolved at Hatton Garden to make an attempt on the Mosquito Shore, although the Belize Mission was as yet in its infancy.

James Pilley—a married probationer, thirty years of age—was dispatched from England on this undertaking in October, 1829. Mr. and Mrs. Pilley landed at Belize on December 6 following. Three months they were detained there before finding means of transit to their destination. The course of the Mission it is impossible now to trace in detail. It had been undertaken, seemingly, in a too sanguine spirit, with insufficient inquiry and preparation. The Pilleys,<sup>2</sup> who broke ground first at Gracias-à-Dios and subsequently removed to Bluefields, near the southern extremity of the coast-line, heroically persevered ; they returned to their task from Jamaica when they had been driven off, after two years, by sickness. At no time had they more than gleams of encouragement<sup>3</sup> ; no reliable convert was won amongst the Misskitos,

<sup>1</sup> This word is a corruption of *Misskito*, the name borne by a family of Indian tribes who inhabit a wide stretch of the Central American coast. Mingling with the Negroes, they formed the Sambo people of the Spanish Honduras coast, to the north-west of Cape Gracias-à-Dios.

<sup>2</sup> One is amazed at the adventurous (or shall we call it *presumptuous*) faith with which, again and again, the Missionary Society in those early days sent out untrained young men straight from England, and single-handed, upon enterprises of this kind, for which the best equipment and the ripest experience could not have been too much.

<sup>3</sup> Pilley's obituary (*Minutes* of 1858) speaks of 'fruit of his labours' won in Central America ; but the only definite official reference to Church membership at Mosquito Shore gives (in 1833) *four* as the members registered—a figure not exceeding that probably furnished by the missionary household.

nor could the children be gathered in school. The difficulties of inland travel were insuperable. Toward the end of his stay at Bluefields Pilley writes lamenting that for nearly three years 'he has not had a single line from the Committee.' The last Jamaica Synod<sup>1</sup> had forwarded to London a full report of the Circuit, and asked that specific instructions should be sent to the Missionary. Pilley waited anxiously, in vain, for these instructions; his work was making no progress, and he was at his wits' end. It is sad that an isolated Missionary should have been left in this plight, without a word of sympathy or guidance from home; one must suppose that letters to the coast had miscarried. The health of the discouraged pair, who endured extraordinary privations in this lonely and savage land, broke down a second time, and they returned in 1833 to England. James Pilley served in the home ministry with much acceptance until his death in 1857; he was noted for his holiness of temper and deportment and his loving attention to the poor and suffering. 'Mosquito Shore' remained on the Stations for five years longer as 'vacant for the present'; then the name disappears.

It is easy to be wise after the event. Plainly in 1829 it was advisable to strengthen the Belize staff and improve the footing gained in British Honduras by extending the Society's work to the Indian Natives and Caribs of that area, rather than to embark on a fresh enterprise amongst people with whom the Mission had no point of connexion and to whom no previous approach had been made. Sixteen years after Pilley's withdrawal the Moravian Brethren sent three Missionaries to 'Mosquitia,' who, after a prolonged struggle, succeeded in planting Christianity amongst the Natives. Bluefields has become the centre of a flourishing and widely spread Moravian Church, numbering several thousand Indian members.

The Honduras Bay Mission, under William Wedlock, made sure if not rapid progress. This worthy man toiled, single-handed, at Belize until 1832, when he was transferred to the less exhausting sphere of Grateful Hill, in Jamaica. On Christmas Day, 1830, he had the satisfaction of opening the

<sup>1</sup> The Mosquito Mission, along with that of Honduras Bay, was attached to Jamaica District.

new Belize chapel, on the erection of which he had set his heart. The sum of £700 out of the £900 this commodious sanctuary had cost to build was raised on the spot. Wedlock left behind him in the colony 36 members in Society—most of these free black and coloured persons living in or near Belize. There were diligent hearers and liberal givers amongst the Whites at this place, who fought shy of entering the Society and committing themselves to Methodism. In Jamaica Wedlock continued his labours until 1837, when failing sight necessitated his returning home. The infirmity became permanent, but in spite of it he 'travelled' the English Circuits, where he made himself singularly beloved, for twenty years thereafter. 'Cheerful piety' and 'energetic preaching' are specified as his outstanding characteristics.

To William Wedlock's charge James Edney succeeded; he carried the Circuit through the crisis of Emancipation. While not a man of commanding ability, Edney was, if possible, even more active and winning than his predecessor. Labouring two years at this period in Belize, he returned to the same post eleven years later. His wife, a gifted lady who died in 1838 after ten years' missionary service, made herself a power by her husband's side; his course was long and richly blessed. In 1832 he writes of himself as 'beginning to feel quite at home with the kind and affectionate people at Belize.' In January 1833 he reports

the Society increased twofold. . . . The new commodious chapel is already too strait; we have been necessitated to erect a gallery sufficiently large to seat 100 persons. It is now nearly completed, the expense being about £130 currency; this amount the liberality of the kind friends at Belize will enable us to meet without any application to the Committee.

Every pew in the chapel was pre-engaged; 'the most respectable families in the settlement' worshipped here. From the outset Methodism had gained generous friends among the business men of Belize, who sustained their Minister as well by their purse as by their character, and furthered well his undertakings in the town.

The Committee encouraged Edney by the grant of £25 to purchase a boat, for which he had petitioned. By this means he was able to visit the settlement of Mullin's River twenty miles down the coast, where the people were 'hungry for the

bread of life.' A Methodist Society was formed here, and Mullin's River became a stepping-stone to Stann Creek, twenty miles farther south. At this point the Mission came into touch with the Caribs deported from St. Vincent nearly forty years earlier, in whom Dr. Coke had been extremely interested when he visited that island, and amongst whom John Baxter had laboured. This movement on Edney's part led to the permanent enlargement of the Mission, which under his successor took the title of 'Belize and Carib Town,' with a second Missionary granted it in its extended capacity.



## IX

### EMANCIPATION AND AFTER

Acts of Parliament—Methodists and Liberation—Conference Resolutions—Rage of the Slave-owners—Orders in Council—The Act for the Abolition of Slavery—Fear of Rioting—The Negroes and Apprenticeship—Henry B. Britten—The Day of Redemption—The Sunday Market—A Gift from the Bible Society—Education for the Negro—A Superintendent of Schools—Church Membership in 1840—Large Increase in Jamaica—Colour Feuds—Thomas Pennock—The End of Apprenticeship—An Agrarian Revolution—Numerical Advance—Slave Marriages—Notable Missionaries of the Period—Visit of Robert Young.

THE Emancipation Act of the British Parliament of 1833, which broke the shackles from the limbs of nigh a million slaves under British dominion, is a landmark in the advance of human liberty. For half a century powerful religious and political forces had been operating toward this issue. The French Revolution shook the thrones of oppressors ; it inspired the down-trodden masses of men with ideas and hopes henceforth never to be relinquished. Earlier than the political upheaval had come the Evangelical Revival in England, which assumed a world-missionary character ; for it recognized a common spiritual being and an equal place in the family of God conferred through the Christian redemption on men of all lands and colours. From these two sources emanated the main influences which in the nineteenth century swept away slavery throughout Christendom, and are bringing this primæval institution to an end throughout the world. No longer will it be possible anywhere for man to hold property in man. The abolition of slavery in the British colonies is an event belonging to the history of religion, and particularly of Methodist Missions, as well as to the racial, civil, and economic history of the West Indies and South Africa.

The Slave Registry Bill of 1817, which was promoted by Wilberforce and his band of philanthropists, and vigorously opposed by the West Indian interests in Parliament, prevented

the introduction of smuggled slaves into the colonies ; it aimed also at protecting the negro bondmen by bringing his relations to his master closely under the eye of the law. Thus a beginning was made in the recognition of his civil status. The resolutions adopted by the Conservative Parliament of 1823 under the growing pressure of public sentiment foreshadowed Emancipation. They were the 'handwriting on the wall' to slave-masters throughout the British dominions. In the West Indies this action of the House of Commons called forth violent alarm and remonstrance.

The Reform Bill of 1832 was the forerunner of the Emancipation Act ; this measure was a first-fruit of the accession of the British middle classes to power. Colonial slavery had been condemned in principle by the Canning resolutions of nine years earlier, which contemplated the placing of all British subjects in the possession of equal civil rights, and invited the colonial authorities to take steps in this direction ; but the liberalized Imperial Legislature precipitated the event, and effected a speedier and completer enfranchisement than had hitherto seemed likely. William Wilberforce—a son of the Evangelical Revival—whose brilliant talents and noble Christian spirit were devoted to this object with single-minded enthusiasm through a long career (1759–1833) and who died just as the goal was reached, was the protagonist of the struggle in the British Parliament. To him, along with Granville Sharp (1735–1813), Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), Zachary Macaulay (1768–1838), Henry (Lord) Brougham (1778–1868), and Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786–1845)—Wilberforce's successor in the political leadership of the Abolitionists—the chief part was due in rousing and guiding the British conscience upon the question of slavery.

British Methodists to a man threw themselves into the cause of liberation. No object outside of the immediately spiritual interests of their faith ever stirred and united them as the anti-slavery campaign did. On questions of ordinary politics they were sharply divided between the two camps. Political matters were jealously tabooed in their assemblies ; the Wesleyan Methodists studied to keep their Church clear of entanglement with parties of the State. Their Missionaries in the colonies were under strict injunctions to inculcate submission and diligent labour upon the bondmen ; everywhere

they were charged to avoid interference and to take no part in any propaganda affecting the political order of the countries where they resided. They must not be 'meddlers in other men's matters.'

These instructions were faithfully observed, although their observance imposed a severe self-restraint upon West Indian Missionaries, who almost daily witnessed acts of cruelty and heard tales of outrage which prompted men of humane feeling to a passionate denunciation of the system that engendered such iniquities. Abstinent as the Methodist Missionaries were in respect to public action,<sup>1</sup> slave-holders knew full well how these observers judged of their doings; they accurately guessed what kind of reports the Missionaries were sending home to their friends, and how through numberless private channels the opinions formed by the pastors of the slaves were filtering into the mind of the British public and affecting the relations of the mother country toward themselves and their cherished institution. They accused on suspicion, plausible but groundless, the Missionaries of being correspondents of the African Institution and the Anti-slavery Society. The truth was that the practices of the slave-holders were such as could not bear the light, and the mere fact of so many faithful and discerning Christian men living in sight and hearing of the abominations of negro slavery, and at the same time in touch with their fellow countrymen in England, made of necessity for the creation of a public opinion fatal to its continuance under the British flag. In this way, without agitation or political action on their part, the Missionaries contributed powerfully to the overthrow of the system, which came to an end within forty years of their appearance in the islands.

The Church at home practised no such reticence as that imposed on its agents abroad. The British Government, and the electorate behind it, were accountable for the management of the colonies; each Methodist citizen had his part in this responsibility. John Wesley, who had seen with his own eyes its working on the American continent, characterized the trade in human flesh as 'the sum of all villanies'; his people more and more decidedly endorsed that verdict. The matter was

<sup>1</sup> They did not fail to give their frank testimony before Parliamentary Committees of Inquiry on the subject; returned Missionaries addressed freely, and with telling effect, the public meetings held all over England in favour of Abolition during the years 1830-33.

lifted out of the common category of politics ; Methodists in dealing with it knew no distinction of *Whig and Tory*. The resolutions of the Conference of 1832 respecting colonial slavery expressed the judgement forming in the mind of Methodism since its birth—a judgement which the brutal insolence recently manifested by the slave-owners of Jamaica had raised to the point of stern indignation. To the question : ‘ Shall any further means be adopted by the Conference to promote the early and entire abolition of slavery in the British dominions ? ’ answer was made :

The Conference feels that it is rendered imperative upon it, by every disclosure of the real character of colonial slavery, to repeat its solemn conviction of the great moral guilt which the maintenance of that system entails upon our country ; and year by year, until some effectual step shall be taken by Government to terminate it, to call upon the members of the Wesleyan Societies throughout Great Britain and Ireland to promote that important event by their prayers, by their influence, by diffusing all such publications as convey correct information upon this subject, by supporting those institutions which are actively engaged in obtaining for our enslaved fellow men and fellow subjects the rights and privileges of civil freedom, and by considerately and most conscientiously giving their votes at the election of Members of Parliament only to those candidates for their suffrages in whose just views and honest conduct in this most important question they have entire confidence.

In the second resolution, after dwelling on the evidence recent happenings in the islands gave of the demoralizing effect of the slave-system on its administrators, the Conference alluded to the ‘ Jamaica Resolutions ’ drawn up by a little circle of Missionaries in 1824 and censured at the time by the Missionary Committee, which were now freshly quoted (in a sense quite beyond their intention) by the defenders of the West Indian system. This partial apology is once more repudiated as

conveying sentiments opposed to those which the Conference has at all times held on the subject of negro slavery, and not less so to the views and convictions of the great majority of its Missionaries who have been, and now are, employed in the West Indies.

The Conference resolutions we have quoted—a model of firm, dignified, and succinct expression—indicate the force and unanimity with which the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion



at the decisive moment threw its weight into the scale of freedom. A Church so abstinent and cautious in regard to matters bordering upon politics, when it chooses to intervene at the polling-booth, pronounces with peculiar emphasis and moral effect. At the same time Methodist public men were foremost on the Abolitionist platform; they took their full share in the counsels, labours, costs, and obloquies of the anti-slavery movement—an agitation the most disinterested and purely philanthropic that ever was. Our two great leaders at the Mission House, Jabez Bunting and Richard Watson, counted amongst Buxton's most valued allies at the critical stages of the struggle; Robert Newton's majestic eloquence, John Beecham's sagacity and organizing skill, both were enlisted in carrying on the campaign. Methodism realized for the first time its duty, and the influence it was capable of exerting upon just occasion, in the decision of social questions of vital moment to the Empire.

The furious opposition the Methodist Missionaries and their Baptist fellow workers endured in the period before Emancipation was a result of the progress of the Abolitionist crusade in Britain. Unable to reach their enemies across the Atlantic, the planters vented their rage upon the friends of Clarkson and Wilberforce at their own doors. Every popular demonstration against slavery in the old country, every fresh step taken by Government or Parliament in its restraint, was followed by an outburst of hatred toward the 'Negro Parsons' in the islands and by the devising of new measures for their repression. As the doom of slavery approached, the storm of persecution raged more fiercely. But for the controlling hand of the Crown, Dissenting and Methodist Missionaries would, without doubt, have been expelled from most of the colonies,<sup>1</sup> by the general consensus of the white settlers. Proprietors and estate managers who had favoured the evangelizing of the Blacks, and had assisted even, with earnestness and liberality, the Missionaries' work, were estranged with the advance of the conflict. They anticipated the loss of their property, the dissolution of colonial society, and the ruin of the islands—in some instances the abandonment of plans they had formed

<sup>1</sup> Up to this time the Anglican clergy, who were few in number and occupied in ministering to their fellow countrymen, had done little to Christianize the Negroes, most of them evidently sharing the social sentiments of the ruling class. Some were ringleaders in persecution.

for the improvement of the slaves. This destruction they viewed as the work of sentimentalists in England remote from the conditions of tropical life and negro labour, whose minds were inflamed by reports which the Missionaries whom they themselves had harboured and befriended for years were putting in circulation. They came to look upon these latter as traducers and secret enemies; the manifestoes of their confederates at home demonstrated their guilt. The heavy decline in West Indian subscriptions toward the Missions, and the loss of other valuable forms of help, which marked the years preceding Emancipation, were due to the bitter resentment thus excited among the slave-holders and their friends; the gulf which had always existed between the Missionaries and the bulk of the white people on this Mission Field grew wider than ever.

A compensation was found for the loss and estrangement just described in the great attention now given to the West Indies by the Government at home. The Colonial Office viewed its responsibilities in this part of the world more seriously than heretofore; it took pains to be well informed on all sides, and welcomed the representations of the Missionary Societies. From the year 1832 onwards a better class of colonial Governors and Administrators came to be appointed—men of more enlightened views and a higher public spirit, less apt to be the tools of the local oligarchy. The contrast between the Earl of Mulgrave and his predecessor in Jamaica was typical of the changed temper of Government in the outlying parts of the British Empire which made itself felt at this epoch. Private interest and jobbery continued to infest the lobbies of Whitehall, and colonial appointments in some quarters were still regarded as perquisites of the poorer aristocracy; but a new conscience was forming in these matters; the reformed Parliament and the awakened public had their eyes upon official proceedings in the colonies, and scandals which twenty years before would have passed unnoticed were no longer tolerated. All this made in favour of the fair-play and equal justice which had been so often denied by those in power to Missionaries and their converts in the British colonies.

Amongst the resolutions respecting slavery adopted by the House of Commons on the motion of George Canning in 1823 was the following :

That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose (viz. the conferment of civil liberty on the negro slaves) at the earliest possible period compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property.

Government and Parliament waited patiently to see this declaration carried into effect by the colonial legislative bodies. They were met instead with angry remonstrances and protests; the slave-holders would be no parties to their own dispossession.

Following up its action of the previous year, in 1824 the Government brought in a Bill, which was speedily passed, for the amelioration of the lot of colonial slaves, which *inter alia* abolished the practice of flogging females, forbade the separation of families by sale, gave security to slaves for property they might have acquired, and provided for admitting their evidence in Courts of Justice. These regulations were made law in the Crown Colonies forthwith by Orders in Council. They were recommended for adoption to the Legislatures of the self-governing Colonies; but the recommendation failed to produce 'any one effective measure of improvement.' The slave-holders hardened their heart both against popular condemnation and Parliamentary authority. In 1826, Parliament being manifestly flouted by the West Indian proprietors, resolutions were proposed and strongly supported in the House of Commons condemning their attitude and contemplating peremptory measures for doing away with slavery. It was agreed, however, to give the contumacious colonists further time to consider their position. They continued to oppose a stolid *non possumus* to the will of the mother country. After further admonitions of increasing sternness, a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed in May, 1832, on the motion of Thomas Fowell Buxton, 'to consider and report on the measures which it might be expedient to adopt for effecting the extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions.' The time was gone by for dallying with the question and waiting on the pleasure of the slave-lords. The report of the above Committee was presented in the following August; it was of a damning character, precluding further hesitation. At this stage the Government took the matter in hand. In the following session the Colonial Secretary,

Edward Geoffrey Smith Stanley,<sup>1</sup> laid a scheme before the House for the gradual extinction of slavery. The Government, as Mr. Stanley said, regretfully found itself compelled 'to moot the awful question of the transcendental power of the British Parliament over every dependency of the British Crown.' Recommendation, advice, and warning, given to the slave colonies for the last quarter of a century, had proved utterly ineffectual; the Empire must purge itself of slavery.

The proposed measure was intituled 'An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions; for promoting the industry of the manumitted slaves; and for compensating the persons hitherto entitled to the services of such slaves.' (1) It declared that from the 1st day of August, 1834, all persons held in slavery in any British colony should be free, and that from that period slavery should be 'utterly and for ever abolished throughout the British colonies, plantations, and possessions abroad.' (2) It provided that predial slaves should remain in the service of their present masters for four, and non-predials for six years, as free apprenticed labourers, under agreed conditions of labour, after which period they should be, in each class, entirely manumitted.<sup>2</sup> Detailed arrangements were to be made by the local authorities, subject to the approval of the Imperial Government, for the maintenance and care of the apprentices; and special magistrates were to be appointed by Government to deal with matters of discipline and dispute in which they were concerned, and to act as their protectors. (3) The sum of £20,000,000 was granted from the Imperial Exchequer to be expended in compensation to the slave-owners for the property of which they were deprived.<sup>3</sup> The consent of the reluctant Legislatures was ensured through the stipulation that any colony which had not adopted the Emancipation Act and drawn up approved regulations for its execution before the 1st of August in the following year would be excluded from the benefits of this financial provision.

<sup>1</sup> Later the Earl of Derby, known as 'the Rupert of debate,' the most illustrious of his historic line. In his youth a dashing Liberal politician, Stanley crossed over to the opposite benches to become in course of time the Leader of the Conservative party and the Prime Minister of the Crown.

<sup>2</sup> Children born in slavery under six years of age at the time of Emancipation were declared entirely free from this date, and exempt from subsequent apprenticeship.

<sup>3</sup> The original Bill allotted £15,000,000 for this purpose. On discussion a larger sum appeared necessary.



Some modifications were made in the terms of the Act as it applied to the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius; and special statutes were subsequently enacted applying to slavery in the East Indies and St. Helena. It was decided later that the term of apprenticeship, as above stated, might be reduced in the case of the classes specified. In the end a uniform limit of four years was adopted.<sup>1</sup>

The revolution of the years 1833-34 brought with it great dangers and anxieties for the missionary Churches, as well as for those concerned in the civil order and business prosperity of the islands. The convulsion occasioned by the approach of freedom in Jamaica we have already described on pp. 121-6. The conditions generating the disastrous conflict which took place there were present more or less acutely in all the islands and in the mainland colony of British Guiana—restlessness and distrust and exaggerated hopes amongst the slaves; anger and alarm, obstinate adherence to the old ways, and a haughty contempt for the rights and aspirations of the black man on the part of the proprietors. A minority of the latter clan were disposed to make the best of the altered circumstances and to meet honestly the conditions imposed by the Bill of Emancipation. Masters who had dealt kindly with their slaves in former days found it not difficult to come to an understanding with them now. In such cases apprenticeship served the purpose designed, and facilitated the transition to freedom. Even in Jamaica, on plantations where the labourers trusted their masters and were treated frankly and with consideration, the establishment usually held together and its business was carried on with a gradual readjustment of methods and discipline. But this was here rather the exception than the rule. In the lesser islands, plantations running smaller and the masters living generally on kindlier terms with the work-people, instances of co-operation were more common; in a few communities they were even usual. The great estates belonging to absentee owners, which were controlled by attorneys and managers, fared the worst. Many of these huge properties were heavily mortgaged; the sums received in compensation for the release of the slaves went to the mortgagees, and the capital needed to provide improved

<sup>1</sup> Bandinel's *Account of the Trade in Slaves from Africa* (1842) furnishes an excellently clear, comprehensive, and instructive review of the subject in its Parliamentary and international bearings.

machinery and to meet emergencies was not forthcoming. Cheated and abused, as great numbers of them were by embittered masters and unscrupulous managers, who could not give up their slave-driving habits, the apprentices worked sullenly, and deserted the scenes of their bondage with the first opportunity. Substituted labour being unprocurable,<sup>1</sup> the machinery of production in field and mill was stopped. Such was the history of many a derelict sugar-estate in Jamaica and elsewhere.

The inhumanity and racial contempt ingrained in a large proportion of the slave-holding families now avenged itself upon them. Interest in the well-being of the Negro and regard for his feelings, other than such as one might have for cattle or dogs, were foreign to the minds of most of the owners.<sup>2</sup> The notion of paying money-wages to a black man and entering into engagements with him appeared monstrous. The provisions of the Emancipation Bill and the regulations made for carrying it out were frequently evaded, and advantage was taken of the Negro at every turn. The slave-holders regarded the Government as perpetrating on them an act of spoliation, which they were justified in counterworking by every means in their power. Had the recalcitrant party in the islands been strong enough to rebel, they would have thrown off the authority of Great Britain, setting up perhaps a secessionist Republic with slavery for its foundation-stone.

As Emancipation approached there was a widespread fear of rioting and licence and refusal to work on the part of the Negroes. Preparations were made in several of the islands for this contingency, and large forces of police and military were held in readiness. The wildest rumours went abroad. In some quarters, there was reason to believe, unprincipled white men provoked the Negroes to lawless acts, with a view

<sup>1</sup> Attempts were made to obtain, by contract, supplies of cheap labour both from Europe and the East Indies; but these met in the first instance with poor success. Later and better managed importations of coolies have had industrially good results in Trinidad and British Guiana.

<sup>2</sup> The harshest masters had their favourites, to whom they showed indulgence, while the common Negro was in their eyes as a beast of the field. The stoppage of the slave trade, it was expected and indeed predicted by the Abolitionists, would lead to a better treatment of the Negroes by their owners. Self-interest would surely dictate care for the physical efficiency and sound breeding of the working-stock, who, if destroyed by ill-usage, could no longer be replaced through purchase from outside. But this amelioration was not produced; the slave-population of the British West Indies diminished considerably between 1807 and 1834. As prices in the slave-market rose and labour became dearer, the slave was tasked more severely and fed more sparingly. These facts were elicited in the discussions on Emancipation.

to give occasion, under cover of martial law, for wholesale floggings and executions calculated to produce a salutary terror ! The exuberant delight of the soon-to-be free were galling to their former tyrants ; their fingers itched to ' give the impudent niggers a lesson ! ' All sorts of shocking consequences had been foretold by the slave-holders as bound to ensue upon liberation ; not a few of them behaved in the way most likely to ensure the fulfilment of their sinister prophecies.

The self-restraint with which the mass of the Negroes awaited the hour of release, the devout and sober joy with which its advent was hailed, were due, by the admission of all candid observers, to the influence the Ministers of the Gospel had acquired over them and the leaven of Christian principle infused into their nature. It cost the Missionaries in some instances their utmost exertions to secure this peaceable issue. To them largely fell the duty of expounding the Emancipation Act and explaining the intentions of the Government. The enactment of apprenticeship was most unwelcome to the Negroes ; in this proviso the Act appeared to be taking back with the left hand what it conferred with the right ! *Slavery* they knew well ; *freedom* they understood and looked for ; but *apprenticeship* was neither the one thing nor the other. The idea perplexed their understanding ; the word was strange and puzzling. They suspected in it an invention of the crafty masters, foisted on the royal message in order to trick them out of the liberty the King had granted ! With utmost difficulty were the more ignorant and headstrong persuaded that the apprenticeship proposals really formed part of the Emancipation Law as approved by King William. In Antigua the Negroes had been so improved by religious teaching, and so much confidence prevailed between employers and employed, that the Legislature, judging apprenticeship to be needless, voted for the grant of immediate and full freedom to the slaves of that island. To this the Crown consented, on the Governor's recommendation. The exception made in favour of the Antiguan Negroes, admitting them to unqualified liberty when elsewhere slavery was to be exchanged for apprenticeship, strengthened the widespread belief that the Act of Emancipation had been tampered with in the masters' interests. On a number of estates the slaves banded together to reject all contracts of apprenticeship and to stop

unpaid work from the first of August. For some weeks previously to this date, over a considerable area of the islands, a general strike appeared probable.

The journal<sup>1</sup> of Henry B. Britten, at that time Missionary on the island of Nevis, supplies a lively picture of the crisis—of the passionate excitement of the Negroes awaiting liberation, the rumours agitating their minds and the gusts of feeling that swept over them; of the sullen mutterings or open rage of many of the masters; of the powerlessness of the better-disposed amongst them to guide their people,<sup>2</sup> and their appeals to the Missionary for assistance; of his meetings with the Negroes as he passed from one estate to another, and his success or failure in bringing them to reason. In the end the Nevis Negroes were persuaded to submit to the arrangements for apprenticeship and to accept their masters as employers under the Act, so that work was resumed throughout the island from Monday, August 4,<sup>3</sup> under the altered conditions. It was a triumph for Britten, as he rode round early on Monday morning, to find the Negroes to a man, and to the minute, sallying out to the fields; a muster was made that day more prompt and complete than the overseers had ever known! The slaves did this as England's, and as Christ's, freedmen, no longer answering to the crack of the driver's whip!

Reassured as to his own people, Britten crossed over on Wednesday to the larger island of St. Kitts, to find there a different state of things. The revolt against apprenticeship was in full course. 'There were but very few estates,' he writes, 'not deserted by the Negroes.' The Governor-General of the Leewards was on the spot,

with deep anxiety depicted in his countenance. . . . His Excellency had delayed the evil till the latest hour, but now found it necessary to put the island under martial law. . . . Who that knows anything of the West Indies [remarks the diarist] can avoid trembling at the idea of *martial law*, when the malicious feelings of the planters have full swing against the wretched offending Negroes—Jamaica for illustration!

<sup>1</sup> This interesting record we have been able to peruse in MS. through the kindness of the Missionary's grandson, Mr. C. H. Britten, of 77 High Street, Birmingham.

<sup>2</sup> 'Who can wonder,' asks Britten, who had many friends amongst the white aristocracy, 'that the poor creatures stand in doubt of *their master's* explanations?' So suspicious were the Negroes that scores of them who could read refused to accept copies of a short printed explanation of the Act which Mr. Britten had prepared, for fear that their doing so would be taken to bind them over as apprentices!

<sup>3</sup> The three days, Friday to Sunday, had been proclaimed a universal holiday.



The militia had been embodied, and were going through their exercises.

Six vessels of war, of different sizes, were in the harbour, well supplied with arms and ammunition. Between one and two hundred marines were landed this morning from one of them.

Before the end of that day twenty-one prisoners were brought in to Basseterre from the country.

Here was the prelude for such scenes of horror, and of disgrace to the British name, as had attended the suppression of former slave-riots in Demerara and Jamaica. But for 'the providential circumstance' that the Governor-General<sup>1</sup> was present in personal command, 'I have no doubt,' says Britten, 'there would have been no small effusion of blood.' The Blacks took an attitude of passive resistance. They had no weapons; they did no damage of any moment, either to the persons or property of their masters; but *they would not be apprenticed*; this in their eyes was only an *alias* for slavery! The Missionaries, and the few other Whites to whom the resisters would listen, went about amongst them to plead and remonstrate. Partly persuaded and partly overawed, and feeling before long the pinch of hunger, the strikers gradually yielded, and the conflict terminated with no worse penalties than freely dispensed flogging.<sup>2</sup> Concerning one of the culprits, who took his seventy-five lashes from the cow-hide whip 'with a fixed, sturdy, unchanged countenance,' Britten remarks: 'This fellow would have been a hero had he received the advantages of education.'

Before the trouble ceased in St. Kitts, Britten was recalled to Nevis by the news, happily mistaken, that the contagion of rebellion had spread thither. He was able to allay the beginnings of disturbance. Nowhere else did the ferment against apprenticeship reach a height so threatening as in St. Kitts.

Britten and other Missionaries realized the risk of the part they undertook as pacificators; it was no time to stand upon

<sup>1</sup> This Governor was Sir Evan John Murray McGregor, a strong, judicious, humane administrator—a Highland chief and a true gentleman.

<sup>2</sup> This punishment was drastic enough. In one district of the island, writes our reporter, the militia were engaged in 'flogging the poor wretches at drum-head, in a most merciless manner, for near two days!' 'The most active militia officer at these courts-martial was Mr. C—d—g, junior, well known as a *perfect Nero* so far as his power extended.'

scruples and follow counsels of timidity. Misunderstandings and misrepresentation were inevitable; the mediators imperilled their influence with both sides in the dispute.<sup>1</sup> The masters appealed to them to keep the black people quiet; they would have the latter instructed in their duties rather than their new rights. An impartial setting forth of the emancipating Act was far from the desire of many amongst them. 'I resolved,' writes Britten to the Committee,<sup>2</sup> 'after feeling my ground, to publish to the labourers from one end of the island to the other what their privileges are, let the result be what it may! It is this,' he adds, 'which has given the planters such huge offence; but I regard it not.' Frankness and fair play, on the part of their proved friends, secured the confidence of the Negroes, and induced the great majority of them to bow to the yoke under which they were required to serve their masters for a further term, in preparation for complete freedom.

Four years was fixed upon in most of the colonies as the period of tutelage. To the special magistrates appointed by Government to supervise the drawing up of the apprenticeship contracts, and to settle disputes arising out of them, was reserved the power of inflicting punishment for all offences; the whip was taken out of the employer's hand.<sup>3</sup> Missionaries watched carefully the handling of these affairs; they could not but observe the leaning of many of the judges to the master's side—the spirit of the old régime persisted under the forces of the new. But the Act of Emancipation could not be undone nor its consequences averted, however much their application was delayed and thwarted.

The Day of Redemption was, in almost every province, kept by order of the Governor as a day of thanksgiving to Almighty God. Reports from all parts of the West Indies testify to the ardent gratitude, and to the unexpected sobriety

<sup>1</sup> Britten heard of negro agitators who went about telling the people that the apprenticeship-system had been 'invented by the owners and Missionaries.'

<sup>2</sup> Some Missionaries apprehended censure from the Committee and their friends at home, on the ground that they had meddled with civil matters in publicly reading and commenting upon the Act of Emancipation. They did this, however, so prudently and to such excellent effect that criticism was silenced. In many instances the magistrates called on them for this assistance, and it could not have been loyally withheld.

<sup>3</sup> The flogging of women was absolutely prohibited. Hitherto nothing had been more common or more ruthlessly practised in the West Indies.

and good order, with which the day was observed. The people were overawed by the magnitude of the boon they were receiving, and the wonder of the future opening before them. One or two quotations, out of many that might be made, from the accounts of the celebration must suffice. Matthew Banks writes from St. John's, Antigua :

Our most sanguine hopes have been more than realized. I have not heard of the slightest disturbance of the public peace in any part of the island. . . . On Thursday evening, July 31, we held watchnights in all our chapels. I preached from 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20 ('Ye are not your own, but ye are bought with a price,' &c.). The congregation of Negroes was very large; and though the people manifested strong feeling, yet it was solemn and devotional. . . . About two minutes before twelve o'clock I desired all the Negroes and the friends of freedom to kneel down, the first to receive their liberty at the hands of God, and the latter to take from Him the consummation they had so devoutly wished. The feelings of every mind during these moments were indescribable; you might suppose the noise and confusion would have been equally so. No, sir; there was too much of God in it, and too little of human nature, to produce such an effect. . . . We felt 'the speechless awe which dares not move, and all the silent heaven of love!' The clock struck twelve, and I exclaimed: 'The first of August has arrived! You are all free!' At this the voice of weeping was heard, and became general, mingled with subdued cries of 'Glory be to God!' and the like. We sang: 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,' offered up a solemn thanksgiving to the Author of all our mercies, and afterwards sang our own hymn for the King. . . . That night will long be remembered by all who were present. . . . On Friday all the places of worship on the island were crowded to excess, by the Negroes principally. . . . The day was spent in all parts of the island far more peaceably than an ordinary Sabbath. The freed people seemed to acknowledge that it is 'the Lord's doing, and marvellous in their eyes.' I walked through the town of St. John's with two of my brethren after ten o'clock at night, and we found all as still and as tranquil as can possibly be conceived; not a drunkard to be found anywhere. We visited the Police Office, and were assured that not a complaint had been heard of the slightest case of disorder or bad conduct. How different this from what is often seen in my native country! There every important political event is enough to fill our towns with drunkenness and shouting, and with all manner of disorder; here 'all is calm joy and peace.' In St. John's yesterday [Sunday] crowds of Negroes attended [Divine service], and we had a little heaven upon earth. I preached in the morning from 'Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.' Afterwards I administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to very many. I preached in the evening from 'We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God'—the drift of this you may easily conjecture.

The magistrates and civil officials in many instances were sensible of their indebtedness to the Missionaries, and handsomely acknowledged it. The missionary influence, which at this crisis saved the community from disaster, had been gained through long years of self-denying toil, and at the cost of many precious lives, gained in the face of discouragement and obloquy, and of violent opposition, coming from the ruling classes who now profited by its exertion.

Henry B. Britten's experience in the island of Nevis was of the same tenor with that just described :

The first of August [he says] was observed by the emancipated population with the utmost propriety. There was no drunkenness, no fiddling or dancing, no carousing. The day was spent with the joyful seriousness and decorum that became a Christian people. By thousands they thronged to the sanctuary ; multitudes surrounded the House of God unable to gain admission. There they poured out their heartfelt praises in songs of holy triumph. . . . On the Sabbath (two days later) they again crowded the sanctuary. I preached four times on that day, riding quite round the island to accomplish this. The next day was the first of their working under the new system.

At each place where he spoke on Sunday Britten appealed to his black congregation, by every consideration of gratitude and hope and duty, to return freely to their work next morning. The hearers gave little sign of assent ; and it was with inexpressible relief that when Monday morning came the Missionary saw them with one accord, hoe in hand, trooping to the fields. The refusal of the slaves of St. Kitts was exceptional. In Montserrat a large number of Negroes threatened resistance, and martial law was proclaimed there also ; but the Montserrat authorities acted with forbearance, and in two or three days the strikers quietly submitted.

The Sunday market was a chief scandal of slave-life in the islands, and blocked the progress of religious work. Under the prevailing conditions of labour, which gave disposal of their time to the slaves on Sundays only, its maintenance was unavoidable. In Antigua, where the labourers had free time on Saturday besides, the Legislature a few years earlier had suppressed the custom ; but its action provoked a riot amongst the Blacks. Several other colonies, anticipating the coming liberation, followed the example of Antigua, more or less successfully. With emancipation, the opportunity



came for a simultaneous transference of the market from Sunday to Saturday. Britten took vigorous action at Nevis for this end. At the approach of Emancipation he proposed to his friend Mr. Webbe, the Chief Justice, that an Act of Prohibition should be passed by the House of Assembly. Mr. Webbe, himself a large proprietor, deprecated legal suppression ; he saw a more excellent way :

If you Missionaries [he said] will exert your influence in this direction . . . my firm conviction is that there is enough good sense and piety among the slave population to induce them to give up the Sunday marketing of their own accord.

Stirred by this challenge, Britten went down to the Charles-town market on the Sunday before liberation and took his stand in the midst of the traffickers. On his giving out a hymn and commencing to sing the hubbub ceased ; ' the stillness and attention ' he received ' equalled that of the best-behaved congregation.' He gave a short, affectionate homily on the market question, concluding with these words :

As slaves, I know you could hardly live without the Sunday market, but you need not carry it on when you are free ; and you *must not* ! If you do, it will be shamefully ungrateful—a most aggravated sin against God,<sup>1</sup> and a great disgrace to yourselves. . . . When you take up your market-baskets presently to go home, you must tell [bid] the Sunday market an everlasting good-bye ! Never do you think for one moment of coming to it when you have your freedom ; I am sure that you know better. Here I told them [Britten continues] what I heard the Chief Justice of the island say of them, and how pleased I was to find he had so good an opinion of them. Their conduct, I hoped, would show that he was right.

The Missionary promised that he would be on the spot early the next Sabbath morning to see if the market was reopened. Should it be so, he would take down the names of those

who should come first to the Sunday market when you are free, and write them down in a book and keep them to your shame and disgrace ! And now, good-bye, and don't forget ! Amid shouts of ' Good-bye ! ' and ' God bless you, Massa ! ' I left them to finish their marketing.

<sup>1</sup> The Missionaries had from the beginning inculcated the sanctity of the Lord's Day as one of the principles of true religion, and unceasingly testified against the Sunday market, both to the Blacks who attended it and to the white masters whose exactions made it practically necessary.

The appeal was entirely successful. Saturday had been added to the Friday holiday ; and on that morning, without any official direction, an immense crowd of Negroes flocked to the market-place, where they carried through their weekly business in high glee. When, next morning, Britten came down early to the square to inspect, not a soul was to be seen ; ' it was empty and quiet as the grave ' ! The evil custom was swept away once and for all. In few other places was the change effected as summarily as in Nevis—old habits are hard to break, even when the reasons for them are quite removed. But the revolution in the time of market-holding soon became universal. This was one of the first and happiest results of Emancipation. The redemption of the Lord's Day cleared the way for the other benefits of religion.

Britten's experience in the above incident ' speaks volumes,' as he says, ' in favour of those emancipated ones.' The unanimous consent of the Nevis Blacks to serve their old masters as apprentices, notwithstanding their disappointment on this score, and despite their repugnance to former oppressors and their apprehensions of overreaching in the dealings of the latter with them, showed a most praiseworthy self-control and judgement. Many of them had learned well the laws of Christ, and many more trusted the word of His servants, and accepted on their assurance the boon of liberty, even if it came to them in a form difficult to recognize. These were a sample of the 150,000 West Indian Negroes who had come under the power of the Gospel proclaimed by Methodism.

The Missionary Committee and Society in England followed the course of the revolution with eager attention. For them the passing of the Act of Emancipation was a glorious victory—the attainment of the object of fervent prayers and unsparing efforts carried on for a generation past. Their satisfaction is expressed in the circular letter dated June 6, 1834, which was addressed to ' the Wesleyan Missionaries in the West Indies,' approving the resolutions reported from the field to celebrate the approaching first of August as a day of Jubilee, and giving some directions for its observance, intimating, moreover, that ' most Christian communities in England ' would probably hold parallel celebrations.

The above letter also conveyed certain resolutions of the British and Foreign Bible Society, by which it promised the

munificent gift of a copy of the New Testament and the Book of Psalms bound in one volume to every person emancipated on the first of August ' who can read, or who, though not able to read, is the head of a family in which there are readers or children learning to read.'<sup>1</sup> The ' recommendation of a Minister, teacher, or employer ' would supply a certificate of competence for the bounty. The tax the Bible Society laid on itself by this proffer proved heavier than had been anticipated. A thirst for knowledge had come in the train of the Gospel. Mission Schools had reached in Antigua most of the slave population ; here and there in other islands they had been set up, under the patronage of some intelligent and kindly master. It was astonishing how many of the Negroes had succeeded, with the slenderest help, in picking up some knowledge of letters. The offer of the Bible Society was published everywhere with the announcements of the first of August, and drew forth a flood of applications. The liberated people well knew that in the Book of God lay the charter of their freedom.

The dispatches of the Marquis of Sligo, Lord Mulgrave's worthy successor in the Governorship, confirm the witness of the Missionaries as to the general good sense and good order with which the Negroes, after their first disappointment, submitted to the apprenticeship regulations. The excitement of the revolution was in itself unsettling to industrious habits. Cases of malingering and of insolence were bound to occur in the mass of degraded labour ; there were, naturally, a certain proportion of born idlers amongst the Blacks, out of whom hard work could be extracted by nothing but the fear of hunger or the whip. The returns of the sugar-factories showed, on the whole, a lessened production and diminished profits during the year 1834-35. Where owners and managers adapted themselves to the new situation and secured the goodwill of the apprentice-labourers the old rate of production was maintained, or even surpassed, with the shorter hours of work ; where slave-driving habits persisted, and bullying and injustice were the order of the day, the yield commonly showed a decrease. There is little reason to doubt that, if other conditions of trade had remained favourable, the staple

<sup>1</sup> The deference shown in the latter clause to the negro father or mother of children favoured with opportunities of knowledge their parents had not enjoyed was delicate and well judged.

industries of the islands would have recovered their equilibrium; the cultivation of West Indian produce stood to gain instead of losing by the conversion of the slave into a wage-earning labourer. Careful inquiry goes to show that at the time when the reform was effected a decline of agricultural prosperity had set in, traceable to the increasing demoralization which accompanied the slave-system. Every year the Jamaica landed estates were sinking deeper into the morass of debt.

At the end of June the Missionary Committee issued an address to 'the Methodist Ministers, Congregations, and Societies in Great Britain and Ireland' informing them of the manner in which Emancipation Day was to be kept on the Mission Field, and proposing, in concert with other Missionary Societies, the observance of the day by the Churches at home. The first of August fell within the stated period of the British Conference, when many of the Preachers would of necessity be absent from their Circuits; but the Committee was assured this circumstance would not prevent the gathering of the friends of Missions and of human liberty on the day of rejoicing. It is suggested that at the meetings thus to be held, by way of giving 'a practical and substantial proof of interest in the negro cause,' a collection should be made in aid of the *Special West India Fund*, which had been set on foot for the purpose of enabling the Missions to embrace the new opportunities and meet the new obligations which Emancipation brought for the Methodist Church in the islands. Twenty-two additional labourers had been voted to the West India Districts by the Committee; eighteen of these were already designated, raising the total staff to seventy-five.

To the address aforesaid a postscript was added bearing on the case of the six Methodist chapels in Jamaica destroyed or damaged in the anti-missionary riots. On a moderate calculation the sum of £2,090 was needed to restore the wrecked buildings. Application had been made to the Colonial Government, which was held justly liable for the reparation; and, failing a response from this quarter, to the Imperial Government. 'His Majesty's Ministers,' the Committee state, 'have not seen it their duty to admit the claim in the extent desired and hoped for, though they allow that the case is one of grievous hardship.' The Government propose to halve the compensation, and will ask Parliament to vote £1,045 for the purpose,



on condition that an equal sum be forthcoming from the supporters of the Missions. The Committee have accepted this offer, and they desire that the object in question be made the particular matter of appeal on Emancipation Day. The collections of August 1 realized nearly £1,600 ; and the Special Fund for 'the general furtherance and enlargement of our West Indian Missions and negro schools' when it was closed in 1835 had reached the gratifying amount of £9,108 18s. od. A fresh impetus was given to the work in the West Indies by the outflow of liberality which Emancipation evoked ; but the reinforcement thus rendered possible still left the staff short by nearly a quarter of the total of *one hundred* Methodist Missionaries which had been declared to be requisite for the manning of the West Indian Stations under the changed circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Along with religion, *education* was the supreme desideratum of the enfranchised Negro. The intermediate stage of apprenticeship was a great opportunity for meeting this need, had the Governments, local and imperial, and the Churches, been ready to seize it. At this moment the black people were malleable—willing to learn and to be led ; they shied at apprenticeship when first imposed, but they had resigned themselves hopefully to this probation. While no longer slaves, they remained under control, bound to their previous occupations and localities. Had schools and schoolmasters been forthcoming in adequate numbers, had employers and the authorities in State and Church unitedly bent their energies to put into execution a complete and well-devised plan of training, the entire body of the negro children and younger labourers might have been brought under instruction. The efforts made were sadly disproportionate to the magnitude of the task. The British public was mightily pleased with itself ; it had laid a noble sacrifice on the altar of humanity, emancipating nearly a million slaves, at the expenditure of £20,000,000 sterling. What was to become of this host of creatures reared in bondage and untrained for any other condition, to what account they were likely to turn their freedom, were questions which scarcely exercised the minds of the liberators. Emancipation had made the West Indian Negroes wards of the British Empire ; the act should have

<sup>1</sup> By adding *schoolmasters* to Missionaries it was made out in a fashion that the proposed figure had been realized.

been accompanied by due provision and carefully considered plans for instructing the emancipated people.

The colonial proprietors in general felt no responsibility on this account. Emancipation had been effected against their will. They held themselves to be grievously mulcted in property, notwithstanding the money compensation granted, and robbed of their established rights. They felt no call to elevate the black man, and had little faith in his improvability; *Haiti* showed whither his propensities would lead him! Hence the reluctance of the local legislators to take in hand the work of negro education. Individual proprietors, and Government officials here and there, seconded the efforts of the Missionaries in this direction; the bulk of the colonial Whites looked on with cynical apathy.<sup>1</sup>

The Methodist Mission had a large stake involved in negro education. Out of the 32,000 of her Church members in the West Indian Districts (according to the returns of 1833) 23,000 were slaves; no other Church had so numerous a slave-fellowship. This carefully sifted membership represented a constituency of Methodist adherents and 'hearers' many times greater. Amongst this large following were found the preponderant part of the more enlightened and respectable black people—the moral backbone of the emancipated community. But the mass of the 100,000 freedmen attached to Methodism, and looking to it for light, were ushered into liberty in a pitiful destitution of the means of knowledge. The *catechizing* practised by the Missionaries was invaluable, but it did not extend beyond the rudiments of religion. The dozen or so of Day Schools we had hitherto set up in the islands were as glimmering lamps<sup>2</sup> in a dark night of ignorance; no other religious body (unless it were the Moravian) had done as much in this way as ourselves.

The Missionaries on the ground sent home strong entreaties for help in founding schools, and the Committee at Hatton Garden was alive to the demand of the situation. The Special West Indies Fund it inaugurated was designed for the building of schools as well as the multiplying of Missionaries. Between these objects the £9,000 yielded by this effort was divided. In

<sup>1</sup> British Guiana affords something of an exception to this general statement.

<sup>2</sup> So far as the annual report shows, £180, debited to Antigua, was in 1833 the entire amount specifically expended by the Society on education in the West Indies.

the accounts of the year 1837, £3,317 is reported as received, up to date, in the way of 'Special Contributions for Negro School-houses.' The annual expenditure under the head of 'Schools' for these Districts had been increased tenfold in the interval since Emancipation. Nor was the British Government insensible to the necessity created by the liberation of the Negroes; it recognized the perils of leaving in barbarous ignorance a great population emerging into liberty from a debasing thralldom. Wisely it turned for help to the Missionary agencies in touch with the slaves. Towards the end of the year 1834 a 'Plan for the Religious Instruction of Slaves,' to be carried out by the Church and State in co-operation, was laid before the Missionary Committee, which they adopted. The Government undertook to assist in the way of money-grants for building, and by oversight of the secular teaching, while the Missionaries were to organize and staff the schools, with such local aid as they could secure. Twenty-four new Methodist Day Schools were to be erected in approved positions; toward their building the sum of £5,000 was voted in two successive Parliamentary grants (for the years 1835 and 1836), on the understanding that half this amount should be raised in addition by the Missionary Society. The Government continued a yearly grant-in-aid to the Wesleyan West Indian Schools, which for a short time was maintained at the rate of about £1,000 *per annum*, and was reduced by degrees until its expiry in 1846. The Committee would not tax the ordinary revenue of the Society<sup>1</sup> for the purpose, but made a further specific appeal to its constituency on this account, inviting them to meet the challenge of the Government. Edward Fraser was summoned from the islands to visit the home Churches on this behalf.

With some difficulty the required sum was raised, and the programme of school-building was carried through. A supply of teachers, strengthened by importations of trained English schoolmasters, was forthcoming from the West Indian Churches. In the course of a few years the new organization was in working order. It was impossible to make the schools self-

<sup>1</sup> It was a fixed rule with the Missionary Committee not to allow its funds to be chargeable on account of buildings and plant required on the field. Such outlay must, regularly, be provided out of local resources. The business of the home Church was to find and maintain *the men* who carried the Gospel into heathen lands; if they reached the hearts of the people they lived amongst and preached to, the Missionaries would surely draw from them the means for purposes of this nature.

supporting, and they threw a permanent burden on the general fund of the Society—the fees charged to the negro parents were necessarily low. Grants for maintenance were made by the local Governments with a sparing hand<sup>1</sup>; private subscribers to the Schools in the West Indian Circuits were disappointingly few; negro education did not appeal to the colonial Whites. The home Government made arrangements similar to the above with each of the Churches planted in the islands.

Thus in the course of ten years or so a network of elementary schools was spread over the West Indies. The meshes of this net, unfortunately, were far too wide, and allowed thousands of black children to escape.<sup>2</sup> The original teaching staff, extemporized out of the material to hand, must have been a motley array. The Missionary Report of 1837 gives a return of 1,266 teachers employed in the Methodist schools, *chiefly gratuitous*<sup>3</sup>! No more than thirty-six of them, it appears, were salaried—a number little beyond that of the head masters or mistresses. The bulk of the instruction was imparted by volunteers engaged in other occupations and giving a few spare hours to tuition. The enlistment of this regiment of helpers evidences the zeal for the improvement of their dark kinsfolk which animated the educated free people of colour; but one can understand how defective this amateur pedagogy proved itself to be. The most one could say for it is that it was better than nothing! The religious teaching, in which the Missionaries and their wives personally took the lead, formed the most effective part of the instruction; along with this, reading and writing and the rudiments of

<sup>1</sup> This aid in course of time became more liberal and more regular.

<sup>2</sup> The Missionary Committee were perfectly aware of the inadequacy of the Government law for West Indian Education, in which they were co-operating, to meet the full necessities of the case. In the *Notices* for February, 1837, they write: 'In the towns and more densely peopled rural districts the large schools, for which Parliamentary aid has been granted, will be exceedingly useful. But we have always been of opinion that a great part of the work must be effected on a principle more pervading and *diffusive*—viz. by the multiplication of smaller schools in the country districts, connected with the estates on which the Negroes reside. . . . Infant Schools, Noon-day Schools, Night Schools would be found highly advantageous, where public Day Schools on a large scale cannot be established.' For lack of means the Society failed to carry out these enlightened and comprehensive views. In the establishment and direction of village schools the local proprietors might have done immense service. For this part of the work their aid was indispensable; but it was not forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> The reports of this period fail to distinguish between Day Schools and Sunday Schools. Probably more than half the number of teachers given were employed in the Sunday Schools alone.



arithmetic usually completed the course. Those planters who gave attention to the matter reasonably complained that handiwork and agriculture were wanting in the curriculum ; had these gentlemen taken their place in the support and management of the schools and applied their practical knowledge to obviate the defects they pointed out, the training of the Negroes might have been set upon a different footing, with advantage to the economic future of the islands.

In 1838 an able report on the new schools was drawn up by Inspector Latrobe and laid before Parliament. He speaks of ' numerous obstacles ' opposing their advance, lying in ' the prejudices of all classes, the want of means, and the feebleness of the instruments employed.' But it is no longer

a few devout Missionaries or zealous clergymen bending themselves to the work, or here and there one in the ranks of the proprietors imparting instruction, in the face of both prejudice and opposition, to those whom providence had placed under him ; at this hour, where one child went to School ten years ago, hundreds may be enumerated ; and where one man stood up in the cause, twenty may be found ready to abet and further it.

The inspector assures Her Majesty's Government that ' the public money voted ' for negro education ' has been well bestowed and conscientiously applied ' ; he wishes it had been ' ten times the amount ! The great difficulty ' in carrying out the designs in view ' is the want of funds.' He finds, moreover, the school methods pursued in the islands gravely at fault through the absence of any ' system combining practical lessons of industry with the culture of the mind. . . . The apathy of the planters on the subject of education,' he believes, ' chiefly hinges upon this point.' It proved a lasting misfortune for the West Indies that the education of the black people was not grounded on an industrial basis—that in their training intelligence was divorced from handiwork ; at this early day the necessity of the combination was imperfectly realized. Mr. Latrobe anticipates that ' all the school-houses to be built in the parishes ' of the islands he has visited ' will become occupied in the course of 1838.' The agreement into which the Missionary Society had entered with the Government four years earlier was being faithfully carried out.

In 1836 the Missionary Committee, under pressure from the Colonial Office, appointed a Superintendent of Schools for Jamaica. The new officer was Thomas Henry Bewley—a Minister who entered the home service in 1823, but had been in retirement for some years through defective health, and had become extensively acquainted with school work in Scotland and in Ireland. The appointment was disapproved by some influential Jamaica Ministers, who regarded it as unnecessary, and calculated to interfere with Circuit administration. The District Chairman of that time (a man who shortly afterwards seceded from the Mission) played the obstructive, and delayed Bewley's entrance upon his duties for several months. This hindrance being at length overcome, he set to work with conspicuous ability, commending himself as a serviceable ally to his brethren. His advice was valuable; his plans for school organization and for the training of teachers were highly approved. It was a grievously felt loss to the Jamaica Mission and to the cause of West Indian education when Mr. and Mrs. Bewley were smitten down by yellow fever, eighteen months after their arrival. Henry Armstrong, an English Methodist layman, recommended by his work in the Antigua Schools, succeeded to the vacant office, in which he rendered excellent service for a number of years. The school system being well established and in steady working, on Armstrong's retirement the General Superintendency was dispensed with. Had funds been available for further school extension the department would doubtless have been continued; as things were, with the cessation of Government grants and of missionary subsidies for this object, the multiplication of schools came to an end, while the number of them remained far short of sufficiency, and the quality of their teaching left much to be desired.

The report sent home by Bewley a few weeks before his death gives some insight into his work and its aims. He appears to have set himself, in the first instance, to make the Methodist Day School at Kingston a model for the island; he writes with high satisfaction of 'the discipline, cleanliness, instruction, moral training, and cheerfulness' prevailing there. Another large establishment of special promise was the new school at Duncan's, in the interior of Jamaica, where the Superintendent expects shortly to see at least 1,000 children

under daily tuition. In this latter instance, Bewley declares, many of the people regard *fivepence* per week—the ordinary fee required for each child, but exceeding the competence of many negro parents—‘as too small a sum to pay for the instruction of their children; they propose to give £4 per annum, thinking nothing to be worth the name of education which does not cost about this amount!’ This contempt for cheap schooling was, however, exceptional. Unhappily, the concern for the training of the enfranchised Negroes felt in England at the time of liberation faded away. At its best it did not extend beyond the range of the humblest primary teaching. High Schools were unthought of; the black people had small chance of growing their intellectual and spiritual leaders.

The proximate results of Emancipation were in various ways disappointing; onlookers made too little allowance for the effects of slave-heredity operating for generations upon an originally savage stock. The corrective and stimulus of education was imperfectly supplied to this very raw material. Baulked in its expectation of the magical effect of liberty on the black man, the British public lost interest in him; its philanthropy sought other objects. The West Indies, after being for long a centre of humanitarian passion and Liberationist zeal, fell into the shadow. During the later forties and succeeding decades the Colonial Office and the Missionary bureaus alike found these islands a burden and perplexity; the people could not be set upon their own feet. The old order had been shattered by Emancipation; the new was slow to emerge. Had a wise and generous scheme of training accompanied the gift of liberty, the next sixty years might have witnessed an advance on the part of the liberated population, the negro freedman answering to the anticipations of his liberators. The task demanded the full attention and resources of the Imperial Government, and was beyond the strength of the struggling and straitened missionary bodies.

The revolution gave the missionary Churches in the West Indies an opportunity of which, so far as their means allowed, they made eager use. We have already adverted to the reinforcements dispatched by the Missionary Committee to this quarter within a few months of Emancipation. Further accessions came from year to year in answer to repeated appeals

from the field. The staff of the West Indian Districts, which in 1833 numbered, all told, 54 Missionaries, in 1840 had become 85. In the same period the Church membership increased by 50 per cent.—from close on 32,000 to 48,000. For some years before Liberation the Churches had been depleted through the distraction of the impending change ; now that it was over the freed people poured into the congregations and Societies whose Ministers had proved their friends and counsellors in the dark days past. Amongst their new liberties, the liberty of worship was that most prized by many of the enfranchised. Masters could no longer forbid their servants attending chapel, nor punish them for holding prayer-meetings amongst themselves. Having Saturday free for domestic business and gardening, the apprentices were able to give the Sabbath to its proper use. Where the new regulations were fairly observed by employers, it was generally found that the labourers did better work in the shortened working hours.<sup>1</sup>

The influx of worshippers called for a great enlargement in the places of worship. The Missionaries Britten and Cameron, writing from Nevis under date August 22, 1834, describe the joyful embarrassment into which they, like their brethren elsewhere, were thrown by this great accession :

The market-people now crowd our chapels ; they almost suffocate each other and the Preacher too, the very windows being choked up by them ! We are involved in pleasing yet painful perplexity ; our chapels are utterly inadequate to our congregations. We anticipated a change after August 1, but not a change so great and sudden. Notwithstanding repeated additions to the chapel in town, which have secured extra accommodation for 600 persons, it is as much crowded as before the first enlargement.

At the country chapels there was a similar congestion. ‘Something we must do,’ the writers go on to say, ‘and that immediately.’ They give details of their plans, and conclude :

All we now beg from you is £60 sterling. Oh, pity and help us ! If any people in these islands have a claim upon you, it is the people here. They have enabled us to build, enlarge, and improve [the Mission plant] on this station within the last two years to the extent of considerably over £1,000 sterling, with the help of only £75 from the Parent

<sup>1</sup> For the 54 hours’ weekly work regularly imposed in slavery times a standard of 45 was substituted under the apprenticeship rules. These might be spread over six days or made up in five days of nine working hours. The latter arrangement was commonly adopted. For overtime the apprentice must be paid at an agreed rate of wages.



Society. . . . We anxiously await your reply. The accomplishment of this purpose will by no means supersede the necessity of building the two additional country chapels [proposed in previous communications].

Along with the above official request, Mr. Britten addressed an open letter 'to the friends of emancipated Negroes . . . and to every true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ.' He describes the transformation going on about him—the new-born children of liberty flocking in thousands to the sanctuaries of God. He tells how chapel extensions made within two years past 'have totally drained our local resources,' and yet fail to contain the flood of seekers after God.

You have struck off the galling fetters of the poor Negroes; you are exerting yourselves nobly to send them more Missionaries. Now they have opportunities for attending Divine worship; but, alas, we have absolutely no room for them!

In this distress Britten appeals particularly to the Somersetshire friends of his youthful days. He declares he is 'ready to sell every book in his library, and everything else he has saleable in the world,' rather than see the black people shut out of the Father's house for want of house-room. Their poverty is as sore as their need is great; 'though delivered from Egypt,' he says, 'they have not "spoiled the Egyptians"!' The success of Henry Britten's ministry in Nevis had been exceptional, and few Missionaries could plead their case as tellingly as he; but his appeal voiced a necessity created by the general crisis. Chapels, schools, Missionaries, teachers—all were required in unprecedented numbers and *required at once*, if the tide in West Indian affairs was to be 'taken at the flood' and to bear the missionary cause 'on to fortune'! Missionary success is an expensive thing.

In the great island of Jamaica, where the fight of the slave-masters against liberty and the Gospel had been most fierce, the revulsion was most marked and the favour of the freedmen to the Methodist Church most signal. Within the seven years after 1833 the Church membership of the Jamaica District all but *doubled* in number, reaching in 1840 the figure of 22,884—not far short of half the total constituency of the West Indian province. 'The blood of the martyrs' had been indeed 'the seed of the Church.' The thirteen Circuits of the island had grown to eighteen. Bath, in the east, is now

separated from Morant Bay, Savanna-la-Mar from Lucea in the west, and Black River from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the south-west ; St. Ann's Circuit is divided into East and West ; Clarendon in the south (a parish hitherto almost unevangelized), Stewart Town in the north, and Mount Ward,<sup>1</sup> situated inland in the west, are names newly appearing in the list of Stations. Methodist itinerancy now covered nearly the whole area of Jamaica. In the St. Vincent District also the accessions of the freedmen to Methodism in the post-Emancipation years were very large.

The forward stride of the Mission in Jamaica is the more remarkable in view of the sharp contentions which occurred amongst the Ministers of the District during the early thirties, culminating in a schism headed by one of them at Kingston, where elements of strife had existed almost from the beginning of the Society. The wearing of *the gown* by the Minister in church was agreeable to most of the Kingston Methodists,<sup>2</sup> and the Missionaries generally complied with this wish by way of 'becoming all things to all men.' The Home Committee declined to interfere. Some of the ablest Missionaries, however, sternly disapproved of the practice, regarding the pulpit-gown as a piece of ecclesiastical show, out of keeping with Methodist simplicity and distasteful to our people in England. The controversy, persisting in the Jamaica Synod for many years, occasioned much irritated feeling and disturbance of brotherly relations.

More dangerous, as it was personally wounding and inflamed by race-prejudice, was the dispute which arose incidentally over the case of a probationer disciplined for neglect of study and other irregularities. This young man, through his personal charm,<sup>3</sup> made many friends both inside and outside the Synod, who looked indulgently upon his faults. As it happened, he became allied by marriage engagement with a Methodist coloured family of influence in the city, connected with the local press.<sup>4</sup> At the house of his friends a party was formed,

<sup>1</sup> This Circuit, in the mountainous interior of West Jamaica, was formed around the Ramble Chapel, in visiting which Valentine Ward met his death. The spot henceforth bore his name.

<sup>2</sup> This custom appears to have been pretty general in our colonial town chapels, along with the reading of Church prayers, and to have made for decorum and a reverent order in worship.

<sup>3</sup> 'An impracticable boy, whom every one liked !'

<sup>4</sup> The ringleader of the agitation was Edward Jordan, editor of the *Watchman* newspaper, which had done gallant service in the cause of Emancipation.

with which several of the younger Ministers associated themselves, seeking to promote a more 'liberal' administration of Methodist affairs—particularly as touching questions of colour—and opposed to the caution and strictness of the older Missionaries.<sup>1</sup> The party spirit thus engendered fastened on the case of the erring probationer! Certain Synod proceedings respecting him, though strictly confidential, became public property; his allies regarded the offender as a victim to his friendship with the coloured folk.<sup>2</sup> This unseemly and exasperating contention distracted the Jamaica Ministers and disturbed the whole Kingston Society. At the same time another case of betrothal between an English Missionary and a coloured lady, about the propriety of which opinion was divided, exercised the public mind and stimulated the jealousy existing amongst the Methodist coloured people.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Pennock, who had now been Chairman of the District for several years, and bore himself excellently in the time of persecution, differed from other senior Ministers on the above questions, and incurred severe criticism. He shielded the young man under discipline, and was believed to be in collusion with the party who had so improperly taken up the cause of the latter out of doors. His administration became more and more erratic and censurable.

In May, 1834, Pennock, who had lost three children by death in succession, and whose wife had been desperately ill, was sent on a voyage to North America for his health's sake. John Corlett—not the most judicious of men, and Pennock's frequent antagonist in the Synod—against his will was made the Chairman's *locum tenens*. Fresh disputes were thus provoked, some of them of a painfully personal character. The feud, which had been softened by Pennock's misfortunes, was renewed with aggravation upon his return. Isaac Whitehouse, who held the purse-strings of the District in Pennock's absence, supported Corlett in opposing the policy of the latter; he sent letters home remonstrating against the Chairman's doings, which show a greater sobriety and forbearance than those of

<sup>1</sup> The latter were nicknamed 'the old men'—though the oldest of them was but middle-aged—and 'the Aristocrats'!

<sup>2</sup> The young Minister under censure died of fever shortly afterwards; he was much lamented.

<sup>3</sup> The recent admission of the coloured people to civil privileges gave them a new consciousness of equality with the Whites, and made them more sensitive about their rights in the Church.

any other correspondent in this distressing business. The leader of the coloured malcontents in Kingston had seceded a short time before, to form a Society of 'Independent Methodists,' who solicited Pennock, with the two young Ministers who were under a cloud, to join them. The overtures, in the first instance, were declined by all three; but Pennock ultimately threw in his lot with the seceders.

Pennock on his return attempted to quash the findings of certain Special Synods held by Corlett, who convened the senior Ministers within reach to deal with emergencies arising during his tenancy of office. Chief amongst these matters was the case of an able coloured schoolmaster of Montego Bay, who had suffered in the cause of the Gospel during the persecution, and whom his Superintendent, William Wedlock, warmly recommended for admission to the ministry. The London Committee would only consent to accept his services in the capacity of *Assistant Missionary*—a position which he declined as stamped with inferiority. Pennock urged his reception in full status; other Missionaries thought it wiser to employ the young man as a public schoolmaster on the District staff. For two years this question remained unsettled, and the 'colour' jealousy inflamed its discussion.

From New York Pennock had written to England resigning the Chairmanship; on returning to Jamaica, in the first instance, he adhered to this decision. Regarding the withdrawal as definitive, when Pennock, at the solicitation of several of the brethren, reasserting his office, called the Synod together to meet him, Corlett and his friends disobeyed the summons; and the scandal was witnessed, in September, 1834, of rival Wesleyan Synods held in the same District! Representatives of both parties had previously written to England urging that, in order to end the strife, a senior Minister of Connexional standing should be sent from home to take the reins of authority. The British Conference of 1834 complied with this request, and Valentine Ward—a Preacher of high distinction in the home work and much interested in negro questions, who had 'travelled' thirty-three years—was appointed to preside over the Jamaica District. A wider authority was conferred upon him, under the title of 'Special Representative of the Missionary Committee and the Conference in the West Indies,' such as no



administrator since Dr. Coke had held in this province. Other Districts beside that of Jamaica had their troubles ; the whole situation of Methodism in the islands, and the critical problems emerging, called for the inspiration of a superior mind and the control of a single, firm, and tactful hand. Such invigorating direction there was good hope the superintendency of Mr. Ward would bring. He was received with much satisfaction in Jamaica, and won general affection by his frankness and fatherliness and the evangelical zeal of his ministry. His physical frame, however, was unequal to the strain of arduous labour in the tropics, and he sank under sudden illness while engaged on a preaching tour near Montego Bay on March 26, 1834, dying in the fifty-fifth year of his age. During the few months of his presence on the field Valentine Ward's bearing and spirit calmed the agitations of party feeling ; his death, with its affecting circumstances, solemnized the hearts both of Ministers and people, and helped to give a better turn to the temper of Methodism throughout the island. When the sagacious, peaceable, competent, and everywhere respected Jonathan Edmondson succeeded to the vacant Chair (which he was destined to hold for many years), the quarrels of the District died away.

Thomas Pennock's name remained on the Jamaica Stations until 1837, when, early in the year, he was recalled home to explain his conduct. After his mortifying deposition his mind became more and more alienated from his fellow workers ; in the last Circuit he occupied (that of Grateful Hill) he was notoriously sowing disaffection. In reply to the Missionary Committee's summons, Pennock forwarded to Hatton Garden ' a long list of charges against some of his brethren, along with certain objections to " Methodism," " Infant Baptism," and " the Eternal Sonship of Christ." ' Informed of this indictment, the Jamaica Ministers held a Special Synod in June to examine Pennock's allegations and consider the doctrinal questions he had raised. He declined to appear before this Court. Inquiry into the charges he had made ' elicited such a state of mental and moral aberration ' on the accuser's part ' as cut off all hope of accommodation. The recusant . . . withdrew . . . and immediately began,' in association with the Independent Methodists to whom he had previously leaned, ' to form a new Church, which he promised would be a model of ecclesiastical

polity and doctrinal purity.<sup>1</sup> He appears to have promised that 'every poor member of the new community would be well provided for, that the greatest freedom should be enjoyed by all, and that an educational system was to be adopted for the training of native youths for the ministry.'<sup>2</sup> Pulpit, platform, and press were vigorously used by the seceders, who denounced their old pastors as 'the Conference Missionaries.' Some hundreds of the coloured and black Methodist members of Society in Kingston and the neighbourhood were attracted by Pennock's programme; but the unhappy man had no means of fulfilling the hopes he had excited. The time of disillusion came, and his followers deserted him, most of them returning to the Church they had forsaken. At the date of Pennock's death, which happened in Jamaica a few years later, the Independent Methodists were almost an extinct body. Thus sadly ended a career of bright promise at its beginning, and marked in its middle course by courageous leadership and much practical ability.

The other conspicuous figure in the Jamaica disputes quitted the arena about the same time. A Manxman by birth, and one of the most ardent, valiant, and enduring of Methodist Preachers, Corlett spent his first five years of ministry amid the rigours of the Newfoundland work, migrating to the West Indies in 1830. His powerful and pathetic preaching, hearty manners, and hard work made him a favourite everywhere with the people, though he was resolutely opposed to the compliance in administration by which Pennock and some others gained a factitious popularity. Corlett had faults, however, which marred his course. Becoming Superintendent of Jamaica Circuits at the post-emancipation era, when the old chapels were being swamped by the inrush of the Negroes, and new and larger buildings were required in all directions, in his eagerness to meet the necessity Corlett plunged into irregular and reckless building projects. He was a poor arithmetician, and got the Circuit finances into a tangle with his private accounts, particularly in the case of 'The Tabernacle' at Duncan's (near Falmouth)—his most ambitious venture in Church building, from which it took him years to

<sup>1</sup> These Independent Methodists adopted largely the principles of the 'Reformers' in English Methodism, with whom they were in communication.

<sup>2</sup> See Samuel's *Wesleyan Missionaries in Jamaica and Honduras*, pp. 81-83.

extricate himself. Censure came upon him later for similar blunders in other Districts. His motives in these transactions were beyond question, but he showed himself dangerously lacking in prudence and business capacity, and was removed to another District.

Fifteen years after his removal Corlett returned to the work in Jamaica, where he was received with delight. With two or three brief intervals of furlough he laboured for forty-three years in the West Indies, accomplishing perhaps a greater sum of toil than any contemporary serving in the islands. Isaac Whitehouse said of him during his first chequered period in Jamaica that he did 'twice as much work for the Mission as any of his opponents'! His impetuosity and combativeness repeatedly caused trouble; but his manfulness, self-denying zeal, indefatigable labour, and effective preaching covered in the eyes of his brethren defects in temper and judgement which would have been fatal to an ordinary man. John Corlett loved Jamaica, and laid his bones there, dying at an advanced age in the year 1877. He was buried at the Duncan's Chapel, which was in a sense his monument.

So disquieting for the time was the Pennock revolt<sup>1</sup> that the Missionary Committee thought fit, in September, 1837, to address a long and impressive letter of admonition on the subject—signed by the President and Secretary of the Conference, as well as by the officers of the Mission House—to the Wesleyan Methodist Societies in Jamaica. The writers express their deep sympathy with the 'dearly beloved brethren' of Jamaica 'in the temptations and trials to which they have been exposed,' and warn them against 'the endeavours made to unsettle and mislead them'—attempts the more seductive because proceeding from some 'who have been their fellow travellers, yea, their guides, in the way to Zion.' The Committee 'hasten to repel the insinuations employed to shake the confidence' of their valued brethren, recalling the proofs the Missionary Society has given 'for upwards of half a century' of its 'undying interest' in the welfare of 'the negro and coloured population in the West Indies.' They ask those concerned whether they can reflect upon the long train of benefits received up to the present hour, and upon the costs entailed

<sup>1</sup> The resemblance between this disturbance and the Warrenite agitation then going on in England, and the suspicion of some connexion between the two, probably increased the alarm of the home authorities.

and the sacrifices endured on their behalf by the parent Church and its emissaries, without realizing that they 'are under the weightiest obligations to remain steadfast in their attachment' to her. Earnestly the letter combats the reproach, which appears to have found some currency in Jamaica, that the Missionary Society had declined in care and regard for its West Indian flock. It points in disproof to 'the vast sums the Society has recently advanced' to aid in the enlargement and multiplication of chapels in this province, and to the enterprises in the provision of schools and teachers so liberally undertaken; 'we have "robbed other Churches"—have considerably neglected the pressing claims of other Missions to do you service!' Efforts have been made for these objects 'unparalleled in the history of the Society.' The writers go on to ask:

Is it insinuated that we slight and undervalue some of you because of your complexion? Why is it, then, that the Committee have sent for your coloured brother, Edward Fraser, to visit this country? And how is it to be accounted for that they and the Methodists in general have received him with open arms, and instead of regarding his colour as a sign of inferiority, they find it a reason for putting greater honour upon him?

They declare that

Mr. Pennock and those who have seceded with him retain few principles in common with the discipline of Methodism; it must be clearly understood that all who join with them renounce the Methodism which Mr. Wesley bequeathed to his Societies. You will see through the insidious designs of those who tell you that you would still continue to be Methodists were you to join their party; and you will act accordingly. Those who have so signally failed to destroy our beloved Connexion at home would rejoice to have their agitating plans and endeavours crowned with success in Jamaica. . . . Your steadfastness will again put to confusion the disturbers of our common Israel.

We may trace in this polemic pastoral the trenchant style and strong hand of Jabez Bunting. On this distant field he discerned the appearance of the same enemy whom he met with uncompromising resistance in the Church at home.

The growth of the Churches in the Jamaica District, even at the centre of controversy, was scarcely checked by the untoward events we have related. The agitation was mainly confined to the Missionaries themselves, and to a certain circle



amongst the coloured people. There was but little fire behind all the smoke ! The necessity which arose about this time for the rebuilding on a much larger scale of the Parade Chapel at Kingston gave occasion for a striking display of the loyalty of the mass of the Methodist folk and of the unshaken regard entertained for the Mission by the general public of the city. This edifice imperatively needed renovation, or even reconstruction, and besides, was much too small for the congregation resorting to it. The three Ministers of the Kingston Circuit—Edmondson, Bleby, and Inglis—wrote to the Committee in July, 1838, describing their embarrassment. They ‘rejoice in witnessing a decided enlargement of their public congregations, and weekly additions to the Societies.’ They carry on open-air preaching besides in various parts of the city, attended with frequent conversions.

The Quarterly Schedules show a net increase of members during the last three months of about 200. . . . Unwearied attempts have been made to promote agitation and strife ; but, thank God, without result. Consulting the wishes of our people, as well as our own inclinations, we maintain unbroken silence toward the opposing party.

The completion of the new school-house, which absorbed the attention of the city Methodists, stood for the moment in the way of plans for rebuilding the condemned chapel.

In October following the greater task was taken in hand. Fifty years had all but elapsed since Dr. Coke’s landing at Kingston, and it was determined to honour his name by attaching it to the new sanctuary, which Kingston Methodism proceeded to erect upon a scale munificent in proportion to its strength. Two years later the Coke Memorial Chapel stood complete, with the Normal School planted by its side. The Synod of January, 1841, during the sessions of which this noble sanctuary was opened, witnessed an increase of 1,700 Church-members throughout the District and of £2,000 in the ordinary contributions toward Church funds. The displacement of the old Parade Chapel by its far more commodious and inviting successor was but a chief example of the work effected in this way during the seven years past, through the spontaneous efforts of the people of Methodist Jamaica ; in the like task the other West Indian Circuits—especially the older amongst

them—were occupied, according to their means.<sup>1</sup> An index of the esteem in which Methodism was now held in Jamaica, and a marvellous contrast with the attitude of the colonial rulers of but ten years ago, is afforded by the fact that the Kingston Corporation and the House of Assembly each subscribed £500 toward the erection of the Coke Memorial Chapel.<sup>2</sup> This edifice was regarded in the light of an historic monument, as well as a chief Christian sanctuary of the island.

The Emancipation Act prescribed six years, terminating in 1840, as the period of apprenticeship for West Indian slaves employed otherwise than in field labour. The term fixed, however, was subject to reduction.<sup>3</sup> In Antigua, for reasons explained on p. 310, the apprenticeship stage was dispensed with altogether; elsewhere, as time went on, its inconveniences and the continued friction attending it made most people wishful for its speedy close. The slaves, baulked in their anticipation of immediate enfranchisement, fretted under the delay, while the landed proprietors and men of business found the uncertainty of interim arrangements unsatisfactory. As the year 1838 advanced a general desire was manifest to see finality reached. With one consent the local Legislatures decided to complete the emancipation of the non-predial (domestic slaves, artisans, &c.) simultaneously with that of the predial slaves (the field-hands), at the end of four years' apprenticeship instead of six. Accordingly Wednesday, August 1, 1838, was determined as the momentous date of the full liberation of the entire body of the 800,000 negro slaves held in bondage within the British colonies of the West Indian Islands and the mainland coasts adjacent.

The second Liberation Day was kept in like religious fashion with the former. The occasion having been long anticipated, the arrangements for its observance were deliberate and complete. The Negroes entered more calmly and intelligently

<sup>1</sup> But in these large extensions of chapel plant debts were contracted which, in the subsequent times of straitness, proved an almost crushing load for the Churches labouring under them.

<sup>2</sup> It is curious that at this period the public authorities in the West Indies were much readier to subscribe financially for chapel building than for education.

<sup>3</sup> Early in 1838 it was proposed in Parliament to terminate apprenticeship-contracts for *all* freed slaves on August 1 of that year. The House of Commons preferred to leave the matter to the option of the colonies. In April the London Secretaries addressed to Missionaries a 'Circular of Advice,' written on the assumption that the full six years' apprenticeship would be insisted on in the case of non-predial slaves, and that serious trouble was bound to ensue. However, the colonial authorities made the concessions of their own accord.

than before into the festivities, which in most places extended from Wednesday till the following Sunday. After four years of probation and graduated freedom they were no longer, as at the first 'turning of their captivity, like them that dream'! They themselves took, through their spokesmen, a prominent part in the celebration; multitudes of them brought to God's altar thank-offerings, such as they were able now freely to render out of the increasing means accruing to them through the comparative liberty they had for four years enjoyed. The prospect of an apprenticeship—to the mind of the Negro hardly distinguishable from slavery—no longer remained to cloud the joy of the liberated, while his friends were relieved from the difficulty of explaining the limits and delays imposed on the boon of freedom. The misgivings and discontents which had marred the celebrations of 1834 were quite gone by, and the second Feast of Liberty was attended with a happiness perhaps as pure and widespread as ever visited any region of the earth.

Richard Harding, writing a year after the completed Abolition, testified thus about its results:

One of the most momentous experiments ever made in any nation has been tried in the British colonies; and as to Jamaica, we are bold to say the experiment has succeeded. The Negro has acted, with few exceptions, with honour and credit to himself, and in no way disgraced his religious profession; he has proved to a demonstration the superior character of freedom to slavery. The planter has received the change in a far more conciliatory manner than was anticipated. Were the managers in the country the actual proprietors, the misunderstandings which take place on the question of wages<sup>1</sup> would have no existence; even as it is, the agitation is magnified and misrepresented. There is a party who, not content with having conquered the slave-holder and rescued the poor African from his grasp, delight in tantalizing and taunting the vanquished, and seem studious to keep up the enmity caused by the former state of things.

It would appear that the irreconcilables in Jamaican politics were not all upon one side.

When, after August, 1838, the Negroes were no longer bound to the soil, a further change came about detrimental for the time both to the commercial and the religious welfare of the islands. The larger islands—Jamaica most of all—contained

<sup>1</sup> Between August 1, 1834 and 1838, the negro labourer was paid for *overtime* only; the work rendered during the hours of apprentice-service was remunerated by fixed allowances of food, &c. From the latter date wages were to be paid, by free contract, for all labour, and the former food and clothing allowances were discontinued.

extensive areas of unoccupied soil, some parts of it inviting and fertile. To these waste spaces the eyes of enterprising Negroes turned. The sugar-mill and the cane-field were associated with the slave-life from which they had emerged ; on these they turned their backs so soon as they were free to move. Few of the masters had done much during the apprenticeship period to efface the memories of the slave-gang and to make the round of plantation labour attractive ; in some instances the want of capital, in many others pride and the absence of tact and sympathy, prevented the ameliorations which might have been possible. The field labourers in large numbers slipped away to the towns, seeking easier employment and a more agreeable life. In other cases the land-tiller's ambition was to secure an acre or two of his own, on which he might settle and bring up his family, living as he listed ; here was freedom indeed ! On soil of average fertility, in that climate, a moderate degree of unskilled labour will ensure subsistence. Patches of garden-ground were easy to obtain. A good deal of land was thrown into the market at this time ; large proprietors were glad to turn to account surplus ground which had yielded little or no profit. The Government encouraged small holdings. In out-of-the-way places Negroes squatted on bits of waste ground which they reclaimed from the forest or the mountain-side ; it was difficult afterwards to eject them.

Isaac Whitehouse, in an interesting letter from St. Ann's (Jamaica) dated September, 1838, throws light upon the change in land-occupation which came about :

It is perceived by our people generally that the rate of wages offered will enable most of the late apprentices to purchase an acre of land, and establish themselves upon it, with the savings of one year ! In what other country on earth can a labouring man without capital accomplish such an object in so short a period ? But a few days ago I was applied to by one of our members, late an apprentice, in behalf of himself and several others, to purchase for them a run of land consisting of 150 acres.

These are examples of thousands of transactions, out of which resulted the creation of a class of small independent cultivators, who formed in Jamaica an important factor in the industrial and social life of the community. This process meant a large withdrawal of labour from the sugar-estates, aggravating the



difficulty of their maintenance. The saleable produce and export trade of the islands suffered diminution ; on the other hand, a new body of peasant proprietors was formed, able to subsist by their own labour in tolerable comfort. Population increased, and with it the total annual yield of the land and the aggregate wealth of the community, while the large estates built up in the days of slavery decayed, and in course of time many of them were abandoned.

In the interests of social development the agrarian revolution was to be welcomed, in so far as it fostered the self-respect and competence of the enfranchised people ; it made for the formation of a middle class of little farmers and gardeners coming between the land magnates and the wage-earning labourers.

The shifting of the population from old centres and settled estates—its dispersal over the empty tracts of the country—added greatly to the labour of the itinerant Missionaries. The difficulties of gathering the people in chapel and in school were much increased by this result of Emancipation ; it militated sorely against the new plans for education. Moreover, the result proved that a large residuum of the petty cultivators were content to live, with a minimum of exertion, in indigence and squalor. This submerged tenth (or more than a tenth) of the rural West Indies population, indolent and dissolute, without ideas of decency or order or ambition for self-improvement, was a legacy from the times of slavery. The discipline of the lash had gone, and in these creatures there was no moral force to replace it. Even where religion had wrought for the elevation of character there remained a laziness of body and stagnancy of mind which in many of the Negroes better education could have served to dispel. Thus poverty, due to inefficiency, continued to be the black man's bane amid a plenteous land ; and the Methodist Church in the islands, after one hundred and thirty years' existence, is still found unequal to the maintenance of its own institutions. Behind the calamities of nature and the adverse economic conditions under which it has struggled, the radical cause of its failure to achieve self-support lies there.

Barbados, which at this time stood second to Jamaica amongst British colonies of the West in importance, had quite a different history ; for reasons already indicated, it passed through the shock of Emancipation with little impairment

of its prosperity.<sup>1</sup> The freed slaves voluntarily remained at their occupations, and the proprietors adjusted themselves to the changed order ; in a short time it was found to work for the advantage of all concerned. In the early thirties the Methodist Mission had overcome the persecution which previously forbade its advance in this island ; with the enlarged opportunities now afforded it made swift progress, both in town and country. The Church membership in 1833 numbered 383 ; in 1840 the figure stood at 1,331 ; seven years later it was 1,877 ; when the decline came about in so many West Indian Circuits, our cause in Barbados continued to grow and flourish.

In the Virgin Islands, with their thin soil and liability to drought, and in the poorer colonies generally, Emancipation led to the emigration of the more energetic freedmen, who went elsewhere to better themselves, leaving their old masters in struggling circumstances. Hence the great decline in numbers of Tortola Methodism during the forties. Other island Circuits suffered from a similar depletion, while the expanding colonies of Trinidad and Demerara gained through their losses. In various directions—political, economic, moral, and religious—the Emancipation era was marked by dislocation and uncertainty. The crisis proved less fruitful of immediate good than its promoters anticipated ; on the other hand, the predictions of disorder and disaster made by their opponents were signally unfulfilled. Even where the dissatisfaction was keenest, no sensible person wished the old days of slavery back again.

From the year 1834 to 1844 the numerical advance of the Methodist Mission was continuous, and spread over all the Districts ; at the last-named date the total increment for the year was nearly 3,400, and the Church membership over the whole area was 54,551—the high-water mark in point of numbers of West Indian Methodism. Then the tide rather rapidly turned ; the adverse causes above adverted to began to tell against the Church's prosperity, and it suffered a decrease, amounting in the year ending 1845 to close upon 1,000—the Jamaica District by itself lost more than this number, and the Antigua District nearly half of it. These losses were partly counterbalanced by the continued gains in the Bahamas and in the St. Vincent and Demerara group of Missions. A period

<sup>1</sup> The slump in Barbados came later, and was due to other causes.

of depression now commenced for West Indian Methodism, the circumstances and causes of which will occupy us in the next chapter. The enthusiasm attending Emancipation had spent itself, and was followed, as is apt to be the case after periods of excitement and over-sanguine hopes, by the listlessness of disappointment. The reaction was intensified by the concurrence of a number of unfavourable conditions.

The question of slave marriage had pressed anxiously on the Missionaries from the beginning of their work. The White opinion of the colonies, expressed by the local Legislatures, regarded the slaves as incapable of legal wedlock. While many of the employers, from moral or economic motives, exercised a superintendence over the 'breeding' of their bondmen, and encouraged the formation of fixed families among them, sexual promiscuity widely prevailed, with its deep degradation and infertility. Black and coloured women were the unprotected prey of white men, whose passions through facility of indulgence passed all bounds. Except amongst the few white women, chastity was almost unknown. It was a chief and constant part of the Missionary's calling to enforce, on White and Black alike, God's laws against uncleanness. Fearlessly discharging this duty, the Ministers of God brought on themselves abuse and persecution from the lewd fellows who abounded in this Sodom of the Western Seas. Amongst their slave converts the Missionaries insisted absolutely on monogamy and marital faithfulness. Without pledges to this effect no man or woman could enter the Methodist Society. Any breach of these obligations was matter of stern Church discipline; God's holy law could not be compromised to meet the evil condition and debased habits of the people. Every negro Methodist pledged himself (or herself) in the sight of God to cleave to a single life-partner,<sup>1</sup> and to rear his (or her) children in the faith of Christ. Foul as the atmosphere of the slave-huts was, the awakened conscience responded to this demand—indeed, there were found again and again amongst the slaves those who had been a law unto themselves in this respect, and who cherished a touchingly faithful wedded and parental love. These marriages were registered in heaven; but the colonial law-book had no place for them, and hundreds

<sup>1</sup> Cases of celibacy among the black folk were so few as to be practically negligible.

of thousands of British subjects in regard to the tenderest relations of life were left on the footing of animals. Many representations and appeals had been made to the Governments, colonial and imperial, on this question, hitherto with but little effect. Now that the slaves were to become free men, amongst other civil rights that of marriage could not be denied them.

The Missionary Societies in England, and the Missionaries in the colonies, lost no time in urging the conferment of this boon on the liberated slaves in their apprentice state. The subject was not introduced into the Emancipation Act,<sup>1</sup> which perhaps was sufficiently elaborate without it ; but the colonial authorities in England had long been aware of this blot upon British rule, and insisted with the Governors and Legislatures concerned on its removal. The latter made no difficulty about admitting the freedmen to the existing provisions for civil marriage ; the claims advanced by the Missionaries were, however, obstinately contested upon two points. The first of these—a question agitated all through the British Empire, and for years debated in Canada—arose from the prerogative assumed by the Anglican clergy. Being Ministers of ‘ the Church as by law established,’ they deemed themselves the only persons ecclesiastically competent to celebrate marriage. This exclusive claim was doggedly maintained by lay Anglicans in authority, as well as by the High Church clergy. Since the bulk of the Christian Negroes were Nonconformists, and unconnected with the Church of England, this meant practically the denial of marriage to them. Moreover, the paucity of the Anglican ministrants,<sup>2</sup> who were entirely lacking in islands peopled by thousands of Blacks—to say nothing of the heavy fees they demanded—put their offices beyond the reach of most of the Negroes, had they been disposed to seek them. The injustice and impracticability of the ‘ dog-in-the-manger ’ policy on the part of the Anglicans were so glaring, beside its contradiction to the principles of religious equality increasingly current in the British State, that it could not be successfully maintained ; one by one the local Legislatures reluctantly consented to the

<sup>1</sup> Admission to the privileges of legal marriage, it might be said, followed *ipso facto* upon release from slavery ; but if this was the fact in point of law, the authoritative declaration of it was necessary on many accounts.

<sup>2</sup> During the twenty years following Emancipation the staff of clergy in the islands was multiplied.



administration of marriage by the recognized Ministers of all Christian denominations.

Beside the question of the legal celebrant there was another point of contention which caused great disquiet and heart-burning. What about the thousands of slave-marriages religiously contracted during the time of bondage, but devoid of civil confirmation? Were these to be repudiated? The happiness and security of multitudes of homes depended on the answer to this question. The Missionaries claimed that all such unions contracted with the sanction of God's Church, and under such religious forms as were available for slaves, should be validated by the civil power, now that the contracting parties had been manumitted. To treat men and women so united as living in fornication, and their children as bastards, was monstrous! There were clergymen, however, who pushed their theory to this length, and who were not ashamed to tell pious Methodist couples who had 'lived together according to God's ordinance' for a life-time that their old vows were null and void and their condition no better than adultery! Unprincipled Negroes who wished to be rid of their former partners had nothing more to do than to present themselves with new brides at the altar, and receive the blessing of 'the Church' and the sanction of the law to their infidelity! The unrest caused by this state of things, and the shocking nature of some of the scandals which arose, compelled the Legislative bodies at length to declare valid and binding the marriages of slaves formerly solemnized by the Christian Ministers—a concession only won through a hard struggle. It had been a rule of missionary procedure to register slave-marriages, like all others, in duly kept Church-books. There proved to be a want of uniformity and completeness in the records, such as the very various circumstances of officiation may account for, but not excuse. These irregularities proved highly unfortunate when civil recognition was in question and exact evidence of the performance of the religious rite was required. The bulk, however, of the pre-Emancipation Nonconformist marriages received legal assent. The validating Act was complementary to the Act of Emancipation; it simply recognized in the negro man and woman the character of responsible human beings and members of a Christian society.

In 1834 and the immediately following years the West

Indian missionary staff received a powerful reinforcement. Death took an early and heavy toll from the new-comers ; but a goodly number remained out of the accessions now made to strengthen the Mission, and to supply it with leaders and counsellors for the difficult times that were coming. In Jamaica alone, at the Synod of January, 1835, beside the death of Valentine Ward, that of four other Missionaries was reported—three of them quite young men. Not much older were William Wood, valued and beloved, who came out in 1828 and bore himself bravely and wisely in the persecution of 1831-32 ; Daniel Barr (1830-35), who passed away in the following year a victim to the dangerous climate of Morant Bay, where he was Superintendent ; Edward Gordon<sup>1</sup> and Thomas H. Osborne, amongst the most promising recruits of this period, both of whom died on St. Kitts in the course of the year 1835-36, greatly lamented.

Others of the same band lived long and attained to the front rank in the West Indian Mission service ; amongst these was William Moister, in the prolonged evening of his days the commemorator of his missionary brethren,\* whose reminiscences and records are frequently quoted in this work. A vigorous, hearty, versatile man, in character and spirit a typical Methodist Preacher, Moister served the Missionary Society in three of its most exacting fields. His probation was spent in the Gambia District of West Africa, which he quitted with broken health in 1833. Transferred next year to the West Indies, he arrived at Demerara in time to share in the festivities of Emancipation. Here he was the colleague of John Mortier and Richard Hornabrook, at the juncture when the work in British Guiana was beginning to thrive. Subsequently he laboured in Barbados, Grenada, Tobago, St. Vincent, and Trinidad, in each of the two last-named islands spending a

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gordon's wife, a talented and devoted lady, who counted (it was said) for 'one half of her husband's work,' remained in St. Kitts as schoolmistress after his decease. In 1845 she was removed to West Africa to take charge of a Girls' School there. Subsequently she married Henry Badger, one of our most successful Missionaries on that coast. As Mrs. Badger she continued her educational work, and carried it on long after her second husband's death. The Society has scarcely had a more energetic and efficient missionary schoolmistress.

<sup>2</sup> During the years of retirement this indefatigable man was always busy with his pen ; he published more than a dozen interesting and useful works bearing upon Foreign Missions. Amongst these are two series of short biographical notices of Wesleyan Missionaries bearing the titles *Heralds of Salvation* and *Missionary Worthies*, which furnish together records of 684 men who served the Methodist Church on its foreign fields, either as English Missionaries or Native Pastors.

second term of appointment. Never sparing himself, Moister was equally effective as preacher, pastor, and administrator. No man had a fuller share in the activities of the stirring years of spiritual and material expansion enjoyed by the Mission in the post-Emancipation period ; he was particularly useful in the raising up of helpers on the field. Twice he suffered shipwreck, and twice experienced a terrific earthquake during the thirteen years of his West Indian service (1834-46).<sup>1</sup> His toil in the tropical heat exhausted Moister's strength and he returned home, soon, however, to renew his missionary course in South Africa, where he served in the colonial ministry for ten years (1850-60), presiding over the Cape Town District with ability and energy, and in great acceptance with the people.

James Atkins, arriving in Jamaica in 1834, ranged himself with the younger Preachers who took Pennock's side in the unhappy contention then dividing the Synod. Growing wiser with experience, he ripened into a steady, faithful, and most useful Missionary. For twenty years he wrought in different Jamaica Circuits, until his death at Kingston in 1854. James Rowden, who had entered the Mission earlier and suffered imprisonment in 1832, was also involved painfully in the Pennock troubles through his too partial sympathies with the coloured folk. In later years he was known amongst the most trusty and efficient Missionaries of the Jamaica District, acting for a considerable period as its Financial Secretary. His labours, which extended to every part of the island, ended only with his life in 1865. Mark Baker Bird, a Channel Islander by birth, was one of the 1833 draft of recruits for the West Indies. After serving his apprenticeship in Jamaica (1834-38), Bird, having a knowledge of French, was sent to Haiti on his return to the field in 1839 ; here the great work of his life was achieved. John Bissell—a sound, upright, exemplary man—gave ten years' good work to the St. Vincent and Demerara District (1833-43), and wellnigh fifty years after this to the home Churches. John Cameron (1833-41) possessed the strong understanding, combined with prudence and self-control, that one associates with a Scottish name. His fruitful but severe toil brought his career to a premature end at Dominica in 1841. Moister, whose colleague he was in

<sup>1</sup> See *The Story of my Life and Missionary Labours*, by W. Moister (1886).

Nevis, characterizes him as 'gifted, learned, amiable, and highly popular.'

Henry Blaine Foster, who landed from England in December, 1835, gave a life-time's service to Jamaica, becoming the patriarch and chronicler<sup>1</sup> of his Church in the island, where he finished his course in the year 1884. With no extraordinary talent, Henry Foster's steady labours, manly piety, and happy disposition made him exceptionally useful and honoured. To the same generation belonged William Hodgson, a man of similar quality and power of endurance, whose work in Jamaica extended from 1835 to 1873; also Richard Harding (1834-77), a loving and wise shepherd of souls, whose ministry everywhere brought spiritual blessing with it. Amongst the choicest Missionaries of this period was Robert Inglis—a Scotchman of lively sympathies, exuberant energy, and sensitive honour. After ten years' work in Jamaica, where his ministry at Kingston and Spanish Town was very popular, and two on St. Kitts, loss of health drove him home; he recovered for a further term of admired and effective ministry in England. John Mann, during his brief sojourn (1833-37), was notably useful in the Windwards District. 'He feared neither sun nor rain,' says James Bickford, 'a salamander for heat and a duck for water—very tender and considerate for babes in Christ.' Coming back to England, Mann lived long and served well in the home Circuits. Alexander Mansie, an intellectual Scot who laboured for ten years in different parts of the West Indies, distinguished himself by winning a substantial prize in money offered by the Demerara planters for the best essay on 'The Education of the Emancipated Negroes.'<sup>2</sup> The sum gained was devoted to the missionary funds.

Beside those we have named there laboured in the Jamaica District during the period reviewed in this chapter other men of distinction: William Ritchie (1831-57), who began his course in Sierra Leone, whence he was transferred to this island in 1833, migrating thence to the Windward, and finally to the Leeward Isles—steadily diligent, unassuming, affectionate,

<sup>1</sup> At the prompting of his brethren, Mr. Foster wrote in his closing years a brief narrative entitled *Rise and Progress of Wesleyan Methodism in Jamaica*, which was published in 1881.

<sup>2</sup> The Demerara planters—comparatively recent settlers—were men, generally speaking, of a more intelligent and enterprising kind than the descendants of the old planter families in the islands. The interest they manifested in negro education was little in evidence elsewhere.



serviceable ; Timothy Curtis (1831-54), a man 'of eminent piety,' who sank in his last illness under the weight of grief caused him by the comparative failure of his work during the barren fifties ; John Randerson (1834-41), noted for his fine brotherly spirit and evangelic power, 'emphatically a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,' who exercised a lengthened ministry after his return to England, where he rose to be Chairman of his District ; William Seccombe (1835-43), a saint indeed, eminent for pastoral skill and mastery of Scripture ; and John Mearns, Master of Arts of Aberdeen, who gave two terms of labour to Jamaica (1840-49 and 1856-69), for the concluding four years occupying the Synod Chair—a man of wide knowledge, perfect temper, and gifts for government, a beloved father in God to his province.

In the Antigua District William Satchell (1836-56) was a man of renown at this time—he had earlier ministered to the African Kaffirs ; also Jesse Pilcher (1836-46), who was specially successful in chapel and school-building—later in life he became Superintendent of the Irish Mission Schools, and afterwards Chairman of the Natal District of South Africa ; William Rigglesworth (1834-39), who held the confidence of his brethren in a peculiar degree ; Thomas Pearson (1834-49), of noble presence and winning speech, whose character was in keeping with his aspect and address ; William Tapley Waymouth (1839-59), a man of 'ingenious and eminently practical mind,' a born teacher and grounded in the physician's art, who turned his manifold knowledge to full account for his people's good ; finally, the Cornish Benjamin Tregaskis (1836-59), less popular than his brethren last-mentioned, but a Missionary of forceful character and special usefulness—a strict asserter of discipline, conscientious in every detail and expecting others to be so, endowed, moreover, with an iron frame and a passion for work. Like Waymouth, Tregaskis had an amateur knowledge of medicine which stood him in good stead. We shall find him later in Western Africa.

Many of the notables of the St. Vincent and Demerara District, which during this eventful period doubled its Church membership, have already come under notice. We must not overlook the gifted and manful James Bickford, who toiled hard and suffered much from the climate in his fifteen years of West Indian service (1838-53). Bickford had a second

missionary career, more than double the length of the former, in Australia, where he rose to the highest Conference honours. His *Autobiography*—with its fitting motto, 'In journeyings often, in perils in the sea, in deaths oft'—is a well-written and life-like missionary story, throwing a broad and general light upon two remote British dominions and widely different spheres of evangelism. In the 'Retrospect,'<sup>1</sup> summing up his experience of Trinidad, the Windward Isles, and Demerara during the post-Emancipation era, the writer says :

I have learnt from incontestable evidence that God gave to English Methodism a Mission to carry the Gospel of 'the common salvation' to the black and coloured population of the West Indies. . . . I have learnt to respect and love the black and coloured people. . . . I have never had much sympathy with the depreciating remarks made by cynical white people in regard to their mental powers and capacity for appreciating and practising the doctrines of Christ. The names of very many are present to my mind as synonyms for all that is lovely and of good report. . . . I found that the needs of the human soul were the same in the sable and white races, without exception or qualification. . . . 'There was no difference'; 'Christ was all and in all.' There has not been witnessed as yet the welding together of these various races into one solid social mass, such as may be hoped and prayed for<sup>2</sup>; still, all things considered, the conspicuous advancement of Negroes and Creoles alike to the position of a law-abiding, contented, and religious people is such as should gladden the hearts of philanthropists and Christian workers in every part of the civilized world. 'God hath visited and redeemed His people.'

This was the judgement of a well-informed, well-disposed, and highly competent observer as to the outcome of Liberation, arrived at twenty years after the event. Such a verdict outweighs the contemptuous pronouncement of visitors full of racial pride, and with too keen eyes for the grotesque or repellent in the physical and moral features of 'Quashee.' It corrects the discouragement of others who expected liberty to act like a charm on the black man's character, and imagined that the vices engendered by ages of savagery and slavery would disappear with the dropping of his chains!

Contemporary with Bickford in the same District were

<sup>1</sup> pp. 116-119 of the *Autobiography*, which was published by C. H. Kelly (London) in 1890.

<sup>2</sup> Bickford would seem to have looked for a gradual fusion of colours in the West Indies and America. Subsequent indications point rather to segregation and to reversion to type in the mixed breeds.

George Ranyell (1833-48) and James Banfield (1839-75), both men of sagacity and strength. Later in his prolonged missionary course (1866-72) Banfield filled the Chair of the Demerara District. But in quality and amount of missionary service rendered to this District (1838-78), Henry Hurd, Bickford's fellow voyager on the way from England and Moister's colleague in Trinidad, exceeded all his brethren ; we shall find later on opportunity for his appreciation.<sup>1</sup>

Robert H. Crane, a devoted Nova Scotian Minister, was commandeered for the West Indies, where he served for eight useful years, till suddenly called away by death.

There are three additional names attached to the little Bahamas District which must be mentioned for the sake of the service rendered by the men who bore them in the critical years after Emancipation, viz. those of Thomas Pearson, Samuel Simons, and William West. Thomas Pearson was as good, if not so eloquent, a man as his namesake of the Leeward Isles—a thoughtful, faithful, zealous servant of his Master, and in high esteem with the people. Simons was of Jewish extraction. Though delicate in constitution, he toiled unweariedly—first for twelve years amongst the Bahamians, and then, after a short furlough, in the Antigua District for fifteen years more, doing everywhere the work of a true evangelist and pastor.

Of the twenty-one years William West spent on the West Indian Stations, the first eight were occupied in the Bahamas (1835-43), the remainder in Jamaica. For fifteen years after this (1856-71) he filled the Chair of the Gold Coast District in West Africa at a very critical time. His eyesight then completely failed ; but he continued in England to preach, and to address missionary meetings, in his blindness. William West was a man of outstanding ability and of rich qualities of character—of unbending integrity and firmness, ardent in the pursuit both of knowledge and holiness, genial and even sprightly in temperament, and full of courage and buoyancy. He lived to the age of eighty-seven, retaining to the last his vigour of mind and the undimmed brightness of his spirit.

The period traversed in this chapter (1833-45) was marked

<sup>1</sup> In Hurd's time Demerara became a District by itself, detached from St. Vincent and Trinidad.

by internal development and firm establishment upon the ground won in the previous days of external conflict. The one bit of distinctly new territory occupied was the island of Grand Cayman, which lies amid a group of islets at some distance north-west of Jamaica. Attention had been drawn to the religious destitution of the 2,000 people of Grand Cayman, and Robert Inglis was sent by the Jamaica Synod to reconnoitre. In consequence a Missionary was stationed there in 1840, who quickly gathered a Society of 60 members; by the year 1846 the number had grown to 90. But the distance of this outlying spot, and the absorbing demands of the Jamaica mainland, led the Synod to transfer the care of the Grand Cayman to another Mission then offering to take it over. The large influx of Anglican clergy which ensued on Emancipation and the coming of the London Missionary Society to Jamaica in 1834,<sup>1</sup> tended to limit from this date the range for the extension of Methodism in the islands; with these new workers taking up unoccupied ground, those previously on the field were more free to consolidate and develop their holdings. The existing Circuits were divided, and fresh villages occupied within their bounds; chapels were built or rebuilt, and schools established in all directions. While the total Church membership grew in these twelve years from close upon 32,000 to above 57,000, the number of Circuits was multiplied from 40 to 50 and of Ministers from 50 to 90—of the latter about a dozen (designated Assistant Missionaries) were of home growth, most of them black or coloured men.<sup>2</sup> The local contributions to Church funds increased in a yet greater degree; by the middle of the forties the older Circuits appeared to be well on the way to self-support.

The Conference of 1843, wishful to gain a better understanding of the changes going on in the West Indies, and at the same time to encourage and stimulate the workers there, dispatched to Jamaica on a visit of inspection Robert Young,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Baptists had been at work in Jamaica as early as the Methodists; they bore a chief part in the pre-Emancipation toils and troubles.

<sup>2</sup> The proportion of home-reared Pastors was decidedly small considering the age of the West Indian Churches. But a people just emerging from slavery, and receiving the poor beginnings of education, could not be expected to furnish in any numbers their own spiritual guides. The supply forthcoming would seem to have been deficient in quality as well as quantity; names appear on the list of Assistant Missionaries at this early period, and disappear, with painful rapidity.

<sup>3</sup> Eleven years later the same admirable man was sent on a still more important deputation to the Southern Seas.



who had been a very useful and popular Missionary here nearly twenty years before. With the account of his visitation this chapter may suitably close. On several important matters currently under discussion between the District authorities and the Missionary Committee Mr. Young was particularly directed to inquire. One of these moot questions was the division of the District, which some of the Missionaries for years past had been urging. In 1842, with a view to partition, the plan had been tried of holding a double Synod, for Eastern and Western Jamaica, under the same Chairman, complemented by a triennial assembly for the whole District. Mr. Young found that the experiment had proved disappointing; the economy in time and expense effected by the shortening of journeys was outweighed in value by the diminution of prestige and efficiency resulting from the bisection of the Synod; the idea was therefore abandoned. The administration of the Schools also called for inquiry. The Missionary Committee insisted on the maintenance of the office of Superintendent of Schools<sup>1</sup> for the Island, to which a party in the Synod had been opposed at the outset and which some of the Superintendent Ministers desired to see abolished. Young was desired to enforce the views of the Committee upon this question, and to report generally on the working of the School system.

Another topic of the utmost importance invited attention—that of the training of candidates for the ministry. The Deputation conferred on this subject with his brethren in the Synod, and with men of political influence in the island.<sup>2</sup> He advised the Committee that the time was ripe for setting up a Theological Institution for young West Indian Preachers. The heavy commercial depression and the decline of Methodism which overtook the islands simultaneously, followed by the impoverishment of the Missionary Society at home through the Reform agitation, postponed the execution of this project, to the irreparable loss of the negro Churches. Not until thirty years later was the scheme of a Methodist Theological Institute for Jamaica actualized.

<sup>1</sup> The present Administrator, Henry Armstrong, was a layman. This fact partly explains the dislike entertained by a number of the Missionaries for the office and for the powers of control attaching to it.

<sup>2</sup> Including members of the House of Assembly, who led him to expect that a building grant would be forthcoming from the local Government Exchequer to aid such an undertaking.

Robert Young found Methodism in the island at the top of the wave of prosperity which had been lifting it since the Emancipation year. His report pictured in glowing language the contrast between the Jamaica he had left as a Missionary returning home, and the Jamaica on which he now looked. 'I had not been long in the country,' he writes, 'before I was impressed with the delightful change which had been effected in the circumstances of the negro population.' An aged black woman, a former slave, expressed the transformation by crouching down with eyes closed and fingers pressed upon them. In the old times, she said, 'we stood *so* ; but now,' raising herself erect, and with her gleaming eyes open to their full width, she exclaimed, 'we *stand so* !'

The Deputation urged on the District the need of financial economy in view of the pitiful appeals coming to the Missionary Society from heathen lands in other quarters of the globe, and the right of the Church at home to expect that its oldest Mission child should by this time be growing up to independence and preparing to shoulder its own burdens, so that the mother might be free to spend herself upon her younger offspring. He was able to carry back to Bishopsgate the welcome news that the Jamaica District had resolved voluntarily to forgo £1,000 out of the annual grant made for its necessities by the Missionary Committee ; he conveyed the impression that at no distant date the West Indian Districts would cease to burden the funds of the parent Society. Alas, scarcely had two years elapsed from this cheering announcement when the prospect so full of hope for the future of the Methodist Church in the West Indies was darkly overcast !

## X

### THE PROSPECT OVERCAST

Morality of Negro Converts—The Perils of Freedom—Economic Misfortunes—Industrial Paralysis—Disease and Earthquake—Position of the Methodist Church—First Prospect of Independence—A Letter from the Secretaries—The Economy of Methodism—A Reply from Edmondson—Education in the West Indies—The Reign of Terror—An Ecclesiastical Injustice—Church Membership in the Eighties.

IN the foregoing nine chapters we have traversed less than half the course of Methodist Missions in the West Indies (1786–1846) ; nearly seventy years remain to bring us to the close of the Centenary period. We shall, however, tell the story of the later decades in a more summary fashion, for two reasons : (1) because the work in the various parts of this extensive province assumed a more uniform complexion as it advanced and as the multiplying facilities of communication brought the separate areas into closer touch ; (2) because the operations of Methodism bore less and less of a strictly missionary character, and approximated to those of settled Churches, becoming a work of *edification* rather than of pure *evangelization*. Writing from northern Jamaica soon after his arrival in 1846, William Tyson describes the routine of his Circuit and the aspect of its labours as ‘ much resembling those of country Circuits in England ’—a description applying to most of the older Mission centres. Sabbath-keeping was now customary in the colonies under British rule ; churches and chapels were conspicuous everywhere, and the majority of the people attended their worship ; the ratio to the population of recognized Church members included in the various Communion was relatively large. In fact, the islands already wore the appearance of a Christian land ; a passing visitor or a young Missionary on his first landing would naturally suppose the people won for Christ, and His faith securely planted in their breasts, so that it might be expected henceforth to carry on its ministries with little extraneous aid.

Appearances were, however, deceptive. Judged by moral tests, the faith of the negro converts, taken as a whole, was very defective. Emotion predominated in it over conviction; childlike in simplicity, frankness, and joyousness, often it was childish in its levity and irresolution. It lacked the power to control sensual passion and shake off the vicious habits of the old slave life. Methodism's task of schooling the people in ways of chastity, honesty, diligence, self-respect, and implanting in them a manly regard for duty, was but partially accomplished. In numbers of instances the miseries of slavery, and his responsiveness to the Missionary's kindness and goodwill, had driven or drawn the Negro to Christianity, rather than the sense of sin and spiritual need; where they failed to lead to a deeper experience, these motives did not prove permanent and regenerating. It was a case of the *shallow ground* of our Lord's parable of the Sower, in which the seed 'springs up straightway because it has no deepness of earth,' to 'wither in time of trial.'

The withering trial arose, not from 'persecution'—this the West Indian converts had withstood bravely—rather from the opposite experience of unwonted freedom and new secular opportunity. The enthusiasm and gratitude attending liberation, the effecting of which the people associated with the work of the Missionaries and imputed to the kindness of the God they proclaimed, subsided as the changed conditions grew familiar, while a generation sprang up which had never tasted the bitterness of slavery—a generation disposed, partly for the lack of schooling, to 'use liberty for an occasion to the flesh' and to spurn restraint. The relapse which came about in the spiritual history of the islands during the thirty years following Emancipation is thus chiefly to be accounted for.

The gulf separating White and Black remained after 1833 as before. With some praiseworthy exceptions, the white residents forming the propertied and official classes, by their example, and by their attitude toward the Negro, whom they still looked upon as fit only for subjection, added to the hindrances obstructing for him the path of moral ascent. Could his former masters have extended to the freedman a real friendship, and given him guidance in the difficult road he had to travel, the helping hand might have greatly smoothed his path. Such generosity would have redounded to the profit,



as well as to the honour, of the island aristocracy. The united efforts of the people of both colours were required in order to turn the crisis of Emancipation to advantage. For the slave-holders to put away their pride and indolence and enter heartily into the plans laid for the improvement of the Blacks required a conversion on their part—a reversal of their habits of thinking and feeling, such as rarely occurs with any suddenness in large bodies of men. But there was no other way of social or economic salvation.

The period commencing in the middle forties was marked by other misfortunes for the West Indies, tending to neutralize the benefits of Emancipation by the impoverishment they brought about. Amongst these was the adoption of Free Trade by England, in which policy the abolition of the sugar-duties in 1846 formed a notable event. The lowered prices resulting—a boon to the British consumer—were disastrous to the colonial producer, still struggling with the new conditions created by Emancipation. The planters complained loudly, and with some justice, that their produce was undersold in the British market by the slave-grown sugar of Cuba and Brazil. There was truth in the allegation of their critics that their neglect to adopt improvements in cultivation and manufacture, and their mismanagement of temper and tact with the labourers, were the root causes of the failure of the sugar-growers. Whatever the explanation, the fall of prices in 1846 was followed by the abandonment of scores of plantations in Jamaica and elsewhere. This meant unemployment for thousands of the Negroes, and a general lowering of wages previously at a humble enough level, producing destitution in a region where Nature is prodigal of her bounties. For a century and more the islanders had staked their fortunes on a single staple ; when this failed them they were helpless. Other resources were then undeveloped ; both capital and labour were unadaptable. The peasant cultivators, who lived on the produce of their own little farms and gardens, weathered the economic crisis best.

Sir Robert Peel's abolition of the sugar-duties was only the beginning of sorrows for the colonial planters. The beet-root presented itself at the middle of last century as a formidable rival to the sugar-cane. Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and France addressed themselves to the culture of this plant ;

before long they were able to provide a large surplus for the general market. Their Governments encouraged production by granting bounties on export. The result was that while in 1850 less than 15 per cent. of the world's trade in sugar was supplied from the beet-fields, thirty years later the competitors were on equal terms in point of quantity, and by the beginning of this century two-thirds of the sugar handled in trade was beet-sugar. Out of the total of 1,785,000 tons of sugar imported annually into the United Kingdom at the latter date, 1,605,000 tons consisted of beet-sugar, the bulk of it coming from mid-Europe. As the volume of the new supply swelled the selling-price of the commodity sank, and production on the old methods became more and more hopeless. Jamaica at the present time raises an annual (diminishing) crop of cane-sugar of no more than 12,000 tons. In three West Indian areas the sugar industry has held its ground: in the little island of Barbados, where skilled management and a sounder social system have enabled the cultivators to cope with a constantly falling market, and a crop of 40,000 tons of sugar continues annually to be raised; Demerara and Trinidad (especially the former) have been favoured in their abundance of rich virgin soil, in the absence of hurricanes and earthquakes, in the possession of modern colonists better equipped and more energetic than those of the older settlements, and in their successful use of coolie labour.

The Civil War of 1861-64 in the United States was another misfortune for the West Indies. That country furnished the nearest and best market for the produce of the islands; the trade-depression due to the causes previously specified was deepened by its disruption, which affected most seriously the Bahamas, adjoining the continent. Blockade-running enriched for a while the merchants and shipowners of the port of Nassau, whose gains formed a certain offset for the trading classes, but of a demoralizing nature, to the widespread loss inflicted through the stoppage of regular sea-traffic.

Amongst the calamities afflicting the West Indies at the middle of the century, the ravages of cholera in 1851 and 1854 call for mention. Perhaps on no country has this scourge of mankind fallen more severely. The heedlessness of the Negroes and the insanitary condition of their dwellings left them an easy prey to the fell disease, which took a heavy toll of the

white colonists besides. In Jamaica virulent smallpox followed in the wake of cholera, claiming victims spared by the latter contagion. Through these two causes the West Indian population was depleted, the Methodist Church suffering in its measure from their ravages. The long years of leanness were marked by their full share of the catastrophes of earthquake and hurricane and conflagration, which recur chronically in this land where Nature's smiles are as treacherous as they are bewitching. Repeatedly, when a gleam of prosperity came to some little island, or when perhaps the poor people with extreme effort and sacrifice had built themselves a fitter house of prayer, their labours were destroyed and their reviving hopes crushed by the incidence of one or other of these dread visitations.

From 1833 onwards Methodism became more and more exclusively the Church of the black and coloured folk.<sup>1</sup> The sifting out of white adherents was not due to exclusiveness on the part of the Ministers or of the darker people, but to the withdrawal of the Whites themselves. This movement commenced during the struggle for Emancipation, in which colonial opinion was overwhelmingly conservative and Methodism was regarded as politically hostile. Proprietors, merchants, and officials who had been well disposed toward Methodism took umbrage at the sympathy of the Missionary Society with the Abolitionists and at the assistance given to their cause by the Missionary's testimony. The estrangement became permanent, and when, after Emancipation, the Anglican Church exerted herself to supply West Indian parishes with clergy, and to extend her influence through the country, the aggrieved parties welcomed her ministrations, and commonly gravitated in that direction. In a community where caste-feeling and colour-prejudice are intense, the social prestige of the Anglican Communion counts for even more than in the mother-country; amongst well-to-do West Indian families there has been for the last two generations a steady drift, not confined to one shade of colour, from Nonconformity toward the Church of England.<sup>2</sup> This adverse current setting in at this critical time told seriously against our Church in the islands by carrying

<sup>1</sup> The Bahamas form an exception to this rule. In several of these islands, where Methodism prevails, the population is predominantly British; throughout the group our Church retains its hold upon the colonists.

<sup>2</sup> It is not affirmed that the tendency alleged supplies the sole attraction of the Church of England in these colonies; that it exists, and has been powerfully operative, cannot be doubted.

away from her side the sons she had brought forth—some who should have been the leaders amongst her laity, valuable not only for their social influence and financial aid, but still more for the help in counsel and Church business to be expected from them. Many who grew up within the ranks of Methodism have forgotten their obligations, and devoted to another Church, or withheld altogether from Christ's service, the gifts and means, the acquisition of which they owed to Methodist homes and training.

To the Missionary Society and the Methodists at home it was a sore disappointment that the West Indian Churches failed to mature in the way of self-support and self-government. After the unbounded sympathy and lavish help given to these Missions at the Emancipation era, and when their Church membership was reckoned by scores of thousands, the supporters of the Mission inevitably expected the Methodism of this region to pass out of the state of pupilage. For a while the Missionary Committee flattered itself with this prospect; the reports of the men on the field encouraged the anticipation. The better-to-do Circuits, such as those of Kingston in Jamaica and of Antigua and St. Kitts among the Leeward Isles, for years past had raised an income equal to their normal expenditure; and Robert Young returned from Jamaica bearing the cheerful message that this District was prepared freely to forgo £1,000 of its grant from England. The collapse of the sugar-industry postponed indefinitely the hopes thus raised. Subsequent events went to show that this great constituency fell short of the measure of intelligence and moral stability necessary to warrant the experiment of home rule.

Twenty years had now elapsed since Emancipation, and the far younger Churches of North America and Australia set up for themselves. British Methodists grew impatient of the continued charges imposed by these islands, especially in view of the enhanced claims of the African and Indian Missions, and the responsibilities newly undertaken in China. Were the West Indies to be a perpetual drag on the Society? Would the negro Methodists be always grown-up babies, unable to stand upon their own feet? If so, the labour of seventy years spent upon them, with its heavy cost in life and treasure, was largely thrown away, and Emancipation had proved a doubtful boon! The arrested development of Methodism here was



interpreted by not a few as evidence of racial deficiency—as betraying a lack of moral fibre in the negro manhood. Such complainers made too little allowance for the depraving and enfeebling effect of the two centuries of slavery their fellow countrymen had inflicted on this injured race. The black man meant to pay back his debts to his missionary creditors ; but he required longer patience from them, and some further credit, before he could be in a position to clear himself. The new poverty into which he was plunged at the middle of last century robbed him of the measure of pecuniary independence in Church matters he had already gained.

The damage inflicted on the Missionary Society by the Reform Agitation of 1847-54 in England was peculiarly unfortunate for the West Indies at this juncture. In all directions the Society's activities were curtailed or straitened by reason of the sudden loss of one-fifth of its income. That our oldest Missions—by far the most flourishing in point of numbers and the most indebted—should take their part with those of other colonies in lightening the burdens of the mother Church she had a right to look for ; but instead of contributing relief, they presented pleas for further subsidies ! The pleas were untimely to an exasperating degree. This vexation is apparent in the West Indian correspondence of the Mission House during the period under review. Economy was enforced with painful urgency ; warnings, not unmingled with reproaches, were reiterated. Vacant stations were left unoccupied ; the Circuits became undermanned ; the reduced staff was overworked, and sad breakdowns ensued in consequence. Retrenchment was the order of the day, and it was carried to an extent which aggravated the other causes of depletion and decline. School grants were cut down, and a number of the smaller and relatively more expensive country schools, the multiplication of which was a great desideratum of the time, had to be closed.

A letter addressed to the Jamaica Synod in 1853, signed by the four Missionary Secretaries and proceeding probably from Dr. Beecham's pen, illuminates the distressing situation. This communication is written in an excellent spirit ; it takes the Missionaries into the confidence of the directors at home, and invites them to share in the necessary sacrifices. The financial stringency of the moment was occasioned by the circumstance

that the managers of Connexional Funds, hard pressed by their own difficulties, had been looking more closely into the costs entailed on the home Exchequer by transference of Missionaries from the foreign field. The inquiry showed considerably larger compensation to be in equity due on this account from the Missionary Society than had heretofore been made. The Mission House admitted the liability. For this reason, and in view of the uncertainty of next year's income, it was impossible either to send out new men to the field or to provide for the passage of those expecting to return home. The annual grant had been already diminished, and the Synod had reported that the District expenditure could not be met on the lower rate of subsidy. In reply, the letter protests 'that the reduction of the grant to Jamaica, in common with other Districts, was not a matter of choice, but of *painful necessity*.' Indeed, the Committee 'apprehend that they will have to make a still further reduction in the grants to all the Districts. Under this apprehension, to allow the past deficiencies and increase the grant of any one District is wholly out of the question.' The Church is inflexibly resolved upon keeping out of debt; 'the confidence of the Connexion in Mission House management depends upon the resolute and persevering endeavours of the Committee to extricate the Society from its present embarrassments' and to avoid them for the future.

If the present diminished staff will not support existing work, then the establishment will have to be proportionately reduced. Matters must be brought to a crisis in Jamaica in the best way that can be designed for the preservation of the work. . . . The Committee deplore the commercial state of things in Jamaica, which so much oppresses our people there, in common with their fellow colonists; but unless there should be a speedy change for the better, the same course must be adopted in Jamaica which circumstances prescribe elsewhere. In the poorer Circuits in England our people are obliged to do with a more limited ministerial supply and with a much smaller amount of the public means of grace than those in more affluent circumstances. Why should the liberality of these poor English Circuits be taxed . . . to secure for the Methodists in Jamaica more abundant provision of the public ordinances of religion than they can procure for themselves?<sup>1</sup>

The remittance to the West Indies of 'increased supplies from home' could only be effected, under existing circumstances, by

<sup>1</sup> The writer overlooks the difference made in England by the abundant supply of Local Preachers and lay helpers, so scantily and in such poor quality available in the West Indies.

the withdrawal from other Missions of a portion of that support which they justly claim. When the providence of God led the first Missionaries to the West Indies, the rest of the heathen world was very much closed against missionary enterprise ; and those islands long continued to engross, to a great extent, the attention and sympathy of the Methodist people of this country. But things are widely changed. The Secretaries go on to describe the vast and irresistible demands the East was now making on the missionary zeal of the British Churches.

Our whole staff of Missionaries and Assistant Missionaries for the 150,000,000 of our fellow subjects in India is only *thirteen*. Is this small band to be reduced in order to maintain double the number for the one island of Jamaica ? . . . The calling of Missionary Societies obviously is to plant Churches amongst the heathen ; and having nourished them to a certain extent of maturity, then to leave them to provide for themselves with such diminished aid as can be afforded, and to hasten to the regions beyond where the people still sit in the darkness of heathen night.

The dispatch we have quoted was in its main contention incontrovertible, and its recipients submitted, as cheerfully as they might, to the necessity imposed.

In the early sixties the Missionary Committee turned its attention to the West Indies with a view to effecting economies and administrative improvements. The impression prevailed in some quarters that the Missionaries of this province did not manifest quite the energy and devotion to be expected from them. The general letters of 1862 to the Districts admit the force of their excuses for lack of better success, lying in

the hindrances thrown in your way by imperial and colonial legislation, as well as by the habits out of which your people have so recently, if even yet, emerged. But we are strongly of opinion that the difficulties of your position must be boldly grappled with. It is in vain any longer to pass them over in the hope that to-morrow's prosperity may make up for the shortcomings of to-day.<sup>1</sup>

Such dilatoriness, the writers believe,

has been the bane of the colony of Jamaica from the foundation, and

<sup>1</sup> The Committee failed to realize how far the sweeping reductions of the missionary staff made in the last fifteen years had lowered its energies, through the excessive labour thrown upon it and the multiplication for each of its members of petty administrative duties.

the Mission has suffered from it. We feel reluctant to make the funds of the Society tributary to the more adequate support of the ministry in a country which, if statistics may be relied on, is more truly Christian than England itself.<sup>1</sup> . . . The brethren in Jamaica should now be prepared to take their Circuits, as those in England, 'for better, for worse,' with such assistance as the arrangements of the District can afford towards obviating local inequalities.

The same epistle urged on the Missionaries the full carrying out of the 'economy of Methodism,' particularly by

the appointment of suitable laymen to the offices of Circuit and Society Stewardship, the reading and explaining of business accounts in the Quarterly Meetings, and the invitation of Circuit Stewards to the Financial District Meeting . . . with the view to devolve financial cares and responsibilities on suitable lay officers ;

as though such arrangements were novelties to the minds of the Missionaries, who were in fact most eager to utilize in this way the services of laymen of competent means and knowledge of accounts, whenever they could lay hands on them.

Jamaican Methodism has furnished us with some valuable Ministers, the sons of its own soil ; why should it not also give us men of business, competent to take part in the direction of its financial affairs ?

the Secretaries ask. The reason why had often been stated by the Missionaries to whom this expostulation was addressed<sup>2</sup> ; they are plain from the previous narrative. Missionary people at home were expecting to reap in the West Indies a kind of product they had never sown. The Bishopsgate authorities appear in this instance to have failed to put themselves in the

<sup>1</sup> Had the Missionary Secretaries had before them the statistics of *illiteracy* or of *illegitimate births*, or any figures representing the ordinary *rate of wages* and the average *weekly income* of the negro labourers, they would surely have drawn somewhat different conclusions as to the Christian condition of those who supplied the bulk of the Methodist Societies in the islands.

<sup>2</sup> A little earlier one Missionary declares that Methodism had no School in the island equal to training a boy up to the level of an efficient business clerk ! Edmondson gives instances of heavy loss resulting from experiments made in the way of putting Natives in positions of financial trust. The people themselves trusted no one in these matters but the Minister, and laymen 'gave it as their opinion that the time had not arrived' for the general institution of lay stewardships in the Societies and Circuits. 'Most of the men available cannot make out an account, or even sign their names ! Missionaries do not spend time in supervising work-people out of pure officiousness, but because they cannot count on lay-help for such purposes.' As it is justly said in the last edition of the *Helpers' Union Manual* issued by the Mission House, 'There must be higher schools as well as elementary,' because 'the Christian Church needs pastors and leaders, men and women upon whom the responsibilities of Church government and Christian propagation can rest. Hence our agencies include primary, middle, and high schools, and colleges.' But even primary Schools were scantily supplied and miserably furnished at this date in the West Indies.



position of their brethren, and had read their letters with some degree of inattention or forgetfulness.

Edmondson, the Jamaica Chairman, makes in 1863 a spirited and convincing reply to the Mission House communications of this tenor.<sup>1</sup> He reminds the Committee that in its yearly renewed 'Instructions' it undertook 'to pay an affectionate attention to all' its Missionaries' 'wants and to afford them every reasonable and necessary supply.' Now a new doctrine is proclaimed.

The Jamaica Missionaries . . . are to be thrown on a population almost pauperized through a false policy of the British Government.<sup>2</sup> Since Emancipation sixteen chapels have become sixty-one, and many mission houses have been built. Grants have been given (in aid of the extensions) and large sums raised locally; but the debts are fearful.<sup>3</sup>

Creditors, hearing of the proposed change of policy at missionary headquarters, were pressing on all sides for payment of their claims.

The Missionaries [continues Edmondson] cajole and badger and shame their people for money in every possible way, *ad nauseam*. This is tending to drive them to a State-aided Church.

Methodist Preachers go popularly by the name of *macaroni-hunters*! Edmondson depicts the poverty of formerly well-to-do Kingston families:

It is not unusual to find the inmates of what was once a large, commodious dwelling compelled to retreat from one part of the house to another—from the upper storey to the lower storey, from the lower storey to the out-rooms or what was once the servants' apartments, there to nestle together for years in a room of only a few feet square, while the stately mansion falls piecemeal into dust and rotten lumber. . . . Neither public spirit nor private enterprise nor legal wisdom mediates any . . . amelioration in the economic state of the Colony.

<sup>1</sup> These admonitions appear to have proceeded from the pen of Dr. Hoole, who, in his intense concern for India, felt perhaps more impatient than others of the continued drain the West Indies made on the exchequer.

<sup>2</sup> The writer was thinking not only of the Free Trade legislation respecting sugar, but of the unwise taxation policy of the colony allowed by the home Government, which hampered and discouraged the small cultivator, whose prosperity was essential to the welfare of the islands. In spite of the extension of the franchise, control of the Legislature of Jamaica remained in the hands of the great landed proprietors, who used their power in the old selfish and short-sighted fashion.

<sup>3</sup> For the contracting of these debts—the recurring curse of West Indian Methodism—the Missionaries on the ground fairly deserve the blame. During the boom, which lasted from 1834 to 1846, everything seemed possible; all the Circuits were busy building; every one was sanguine, and large drafts were drawn on the future. The *slump* came; borrowing, easily made a few years earlier, became 'fearful debts.'

The Baptist Missionary Society had by this date left its Missionaries to shift for themselves in Jamaica, and the Secretaries pointed to their example. Edmondson replies that their Ministers engage freely in trade. He concludes :

We feel quite discouraged. We do what we can to raise money, and can never give satisfaction ; and there is such a continuation of reflections and threats as almost to sink our spirits. . . . But if we never get one cheering word from the ink of the Mission House we will endeavour to approve ourselves to God.

Amongst other matters, the Mission House raised the question of the scale of payment to Native Ministers, of whom the staff now included a considerable proportion. The usage in the West Indies had been to make no difference on this score amongst the Ministers of the same status ; against this the Secretaries appeal to ' the common-sense conviction of practical men of business at home.' Edmondson wishes that English common sense had operated earlier in the matter ; the distinction raised should have been made at the beginning (as indeed it had been on other fields), or not at all. He says that in the case of John Hodge, the first coloured Preacher admitted to the ministry, the Committee expressly rejected the local Synod's suggestion to this effect. The precedent thus established had been followed from that date ; to put it aside now would provoke resentment and a sense of injustice certain to have injurious consequences. Edmondson approves of the plan suggested by Secretary Osborn that a Theological Institution should be started in the islands for training West Indian Ministers, who in consideration of the help received should for the future be placed upon a status of their own.<sup>1</sup>

The Jamaica Synod of 1864 met under a sense of extreme discouragement. The loss during the past year of more than 1,600 out of its 19,000 Church members, following on a succession of decreases,<sup>2</sup> accentuated the censure contained in the Committee's recent inquiries and expostulations. According to the testimony of a new-comer, ' the spirit of enterprise and aggression ' was ' practically dormant ' in the District. One hopeful proposal however emerged, in which young Enos

<sup>1</sup> This plan was laid on the shelf for many years to come.

<sup>2</sup> In nineteen years the District membership had been reduced by over 7,000 ; rarely in that time had the continuous shrinkage been interrupted. And it could not be said that the reduction in *quantity* was compensated by improvement in *quality*.

Nuttall had a prominent part, for the founding of a Methodist High School,<sup>1</sup> with a view to rearing laymen qualified to fill influential places in Society and to serve their Church intelligently in time to come. On a school of this nature classes for training lay agents and candidates for the ministry could be grafted. If the Missionary Society would grant £2,000 to start the enterprise, it was thought that the remaining funds necessary might be raised on the island in the shape of subscription shares. For the present nothing came of the proposal; Bishopsgate was not prepared to find the sum of money necessary for initiation. The 1864 Synod made such response as it could to the demand of the Missionary Committee for retrenchment. After much debate it propounded a schedule of readjusted salaries and allowances which showed some saving—not very large—on the current annual grant for staff-maintenance.<sup>2</sup> The Committee, setting aside this plan as inadequate, went into the calculations on its own account, and sent down to the Districts a drastic scheme of reduction which caused the Chairman, into whose hands it first came, something like consternation. Edmondson convoked the senior Missionaries of the District for consultation on the official proposals (other Chairmen took a similar course), and an anxious and full discussion with the home Secretaries ensued. It is not necessary to enter into the details of the argument and to examine the estimates and calculations presented from either side. The

<sup>1</sup> The Synod instructed Nuttall—a very able Minister, but still in his probation—to communicate with the London Secretaries on this subject. The latter appear to have taken offence at the youthfulness of their correspondent; they told him he had better keep to his studies instead of meddling with business beyond his years! (The Superintendent with whom he lived vouched for Nuttall's extraordinary application.) Whether this snub affected the youthful Missionary's course we do not know; but he withdrew not long after from the Wesleyan ranks to join the Anglican ministry, in which he rendered for many years services of the highest character. He died a few years back as Archbishop Nuttall of Jamaica, the most revered and influential ecclesiastic of the islands. His brother, Ezra Nuttall, also recently deceased, became President of our South African Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Missionary stipends had hitherto been determined upon the method originally followed in the payment of the Preachers in Home Circuits, that of allowing so much quarterly for certain specified necessities of maintenance—the 'ordinaries'—while the various supplementary and accidental items of personal and family outlay, including travelling and medical expenditure, were treated as 'extraordinaries,' which had to be reported to the Synod and settled there in detail, and presented, finally through its *Minutes* to the Missionary Committee at home. This was a cumbersome and undignified, not to say pettifogging, mode of proceeding, and left room for a good deal of uncertainty and caprice. Every one was relieved by the substitution of a regular lump sum, by way of fixed stipend, in lieu of the variable 'ordinaries' and 'extraordinaries' making up the Missionary's income. There still remained real 'extraordinaries'—occasions of expense quite out of the common; these for the future were to be referred directly through the District Chairman to the Mission House in London.

Missionaries accepted the principle on which Bishopsgate had proceeded, viz. that yearly salaries must be definitely fixed by bringing into a lump sum the too elastic 'allowances'; *children* should continue to form an individual item of charge, as at home, and travelling expenses would be separately budgeted for according to the necessities of each case; but 'extraordinaries' must be jealously watched and kept within strict bounds. These reforms the Missionaries assented to. But when it came to the *figures* of the scale of stipend and children's allowances determined by the Committee, protests were loud and general. In the end an agreement was reached which did not differ greatly in effect from the plan the Jamaica District had itself proposed.<sup>1</sup> The inquiry was of a most trying nature, entering into the minutiae of market prices and domestic expenses; it hardly seems to have been conducted with all the consideration and tenderness desirable. It is distressing to see such men as Jonathan Edmondson and Henry Hurd—the soul of honour and conscientiousness—put to it to defend themselves and their brethren in respect to the most ordinary outlay on house-keeping and horse-hire.<sup>2</sup> The line of investigation pursued was parallel to that later adopted in the Indian Missionary Controversy of 1889; the outcome in the two cases was not dissimilar.

One circumstance gave peculiar evidence of inconsideration in the determining of the new financial scheme. It was announced as coming into force from February of the current year (1863), whereas the news of it only reached the Islands in *June*, when payments had already been made in the Districts for nearly six months upon the former understanding! This discrepancy, and the refusal of the Mission House to meet the deficiency thus augmented on the current District accounts, reported to the following January Synod, left the Jamaica Chairman under a debt he had no means of discharging, which the Bishopsgate treasury had in the end to cancel. The revision of stipends

<sup>1</sup> Senior Missionaries with large families and single men obliged to keep house for themselves fared the worst under the revised arrangements. Mr. Edmondson, for example, is said to have suffered gravely from the severe personal economies to which he had to resort; to this cause the premature failure of his health was ascribed by his friends.

<sup>2</sup> The men brought to book were naturally disposed to say that if the Mission House could not trust them in details of this kind it had better not trust them at all! To have the minds of so many experienced and devoted Missionaries preoccupied and harassed for months with sumptuary matters and the question as to how little it was possible for them to live upon, was in itself a sore evil and injury to the work of God.



was not further prosecuted; but again in 1865-66 the District grants were cut down, to the further straitening of the work.<sup>1</sup>

However, by this time affairs in Jamaica had taken a fresh turn and the outlook of Methodism in the islands generally was brighter than for many years past. In 1865 a storm arose which served to clear the political atmosphere. A negro riot, breaking out under great provocation in the east of Jamaica, was magnified by the panic of the local magistrates and through the folly of the Governor of the island into a dangerous crisis. Discontent had been rife amongst the black labourers for a long time previously. The planter-proprietors of the old slave-owning class, though much impoverished, recovered their ascendancy on the magistrates' bench and in the local Legislature, after the defeat and discredit that fell upon them with the passing of the Emancipation Act. Their spirit was unchanged, and their command of the House of Assembly continued to be used, with as little wisdom as justice, in furtherance of their class interests. A Missionary writing at this time speaks of the American War as having brought the ruin of Jamaica's prosperity to a culmination, and adds :

In the midst of all this we are afflicted with an incapable and imbecile Legislature—a Legislature that could deliberately, amongst its latest Acts, abandon 1s. 6d. duty on rum (produced by the sugar-estates) . . . to lay an additional 1s. per cwt. on rice, the food of the people. . . . *Labourers*, as well as *canes* [he says], are ground to make our staple.

Beside the unfair and repressive incidence of the taxes, the ruling classes showed gross contempt toward the Negroes and coloured folk and treated them with shocking injustice in the petty courts of law. The Colonial Office in London played the part of Gallio toward West Indian grievances, paying small heed to complaints from this quarter. After the vast expense and trouble of slave-Emancipation, Great Britain wished to be plagued as little as possible with these unlucky islands. The country was vexed to find that liberation did not prove a panacea, and would not give the attention and management, and make the added expenditure, necessary to develop this

<sup>1</sup> Edmondson refers to a letter from the Secretaries to this effect as 'a crushing document . . . not unlikely to crush some of them (the Jamaica Missionaries) prematurely into their graves, or to other fields of labour. Such a communication from the Mission House I never saw, I never heard of' before. Dr. Hoole, who conducted the West Indian correspondence, while a model of kindness and courtesy in personal intercourse, and proverbial for his hospitalities to Missionaries, was not always happy in the style of his letters.

valuable estate of the Empire and to impart a right direction to the capabilities of the enfranchised slaves. The local colonial authorities, of whose disposition Downing Street and Parliament had had abundant proof in former days, were left again to go their own way—a way which, for Jamaica, ended naturally enough in the riot and massacre of 1865.

A full account of this lamentable episode was given by Henry Bleby in his narrative entitled *The Reign of Terror*, published in 1868.

Two repressive measures brought forward in the Jamaica Legislature during 1865 the mild-tempered Mearns denounces sternly : (1) it was proposed, by a resolution, incredible in any other Court of Legislation, 'to deprive the Negroes of the possession of all implements of agriculture'—with a view to stop the cultivation of peasant farms and compel the Blacks to work on the large estates—an Act 'calculated to drive the labourers to desperation' ; (2) the other obnoxious proposal was a Bill for regulating worship, 'only equalled in tyranny,' Mearns maintains, 'by the laws enacted in Jamaica before the abolition of slavery.' This measure was aimed against irresponsible negro Preachers, numbers of whom burlesqued Christianity and spread the wildest Antinomian ideas. Mearns judged the action taken against these irregulars to be an infringement of religious liberty ; Edmondson opposed the Bill in its original draft as calculated to repress honest religious initiative. He and his Kingston colleagues helped to amend it, and supported the measure in its guarded form, believing that a check on the licence of preaching, abused by adventurers 'without intelligence, principle, or character,'<sup>1</sup> was necessary. Undoubtedly the demoralizing and disintegrating activity of the negro 'free-lance' was a cause from which all Churches suffered at this time ; but the employment of the secular arm to suppress it was a policy of doubtful wisdom.

At the end of this year Edmondson, whose strength visibly sank beneath the load of anxieties and troubles that weighed upon him, was superseded by Mearns in the chair of the Jamaica District. The differences of judgement which had arisen between the two gave to the change the appearance of a censure upon the senior man, who was at the time suffering from a

<sup>1</sup> In much the same terms the first Methodist Preachers in the West Indies were denounced !

peculiarly distressing domestic affliction ; he was led to think that people at home held him to blame for the decline of the District under his administration. There was little ground for any such opinion ; it could not have been entertained by those who knew the man and his work. Crushed by this concurrence of misfortune, Edmondson died at Kingston in August, 1866 ; and a long career in the West Indian service of distinguished ability, unwavering fidelity, and admirable Christian devotion thus sorrowfully came to an end.

The condition of Jamaica now began to improve ; the tide so long ebbing turned at last. With the new political settlement and the gradual betterment in wages and trade activity the negro cultivators grew more contented and tractable. The effect of the heavy reproof that had come on their scornors and oppressors was not lost upon them. They paid increased respect to British justice, and recognized their friends anew in the Missionary Churches. By the beginning of the seventies Methodist influence had distinctly revived in Jamaica, and in other parts of the West Indies coincidently. In 1868 the Church membership sank to its lowest point numerically, standing at 38,444—a total nearly one-third below that reached twenty-two years earlier ; in 1872 it had risen to 45,956, and continued to advance till the time of the formation of the separated Conferences. Though West Indian Methodism has known troubled days since, it has experienced none so dark and despondent as those that marked the fifties and sixties of last century.

## XI

### THE CLOUDY AND DARK DAY

Discouraging Statistics—The Faithful Remnant—Religious Revival—Offences and their Consequences—The Demerara Mission—A Training College—Methodism in Roman Catholic Islands and Others—Riots in St. Vincent—Notable Missionaries.

IN the previous chapter we have surveyed the external conditions of Methodist work on the West Indian field as they prevailed during the twenty years from 1846 onwards, and chiefly as respects Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> The internal history of the Mission Churches in that testing period is difficult to trace; the material is scantier than before. This very fact indicates a comparative rarity of salient incidents and lively manifestations of spiritual character and power. At the outset Mearns, then new to the work, records (at Guy's Hill, in Jamaica) 'much to humble us and induce anxiety for the future . . . the worldly-mindedness of many of our members,' and so on. Hornabrook sees 'a humiliating change' that has 'come over many of the inhabitants of Jamaica, a blighting influence acting in some of the Churches.' From various parts of the island laments are heard in the later forties of 'spiritual declension,' of 'discouragement and falling off,' concurrent with the growing financial difficulties caused by the ebb in commerce.<sup>2</sup> Such was the prevailing strain of missionary letters from Jamaica at this time. Other Districts tell of distresses and losses due to lack of employment and lowered wages, to emigration, to visitations of drought or hurricane, and subsequently (in the early fifties) to the ravages of cholera and small-pox rather than to backsliding in the Church. In the ten years following 1845 the membership of the Antigua District was reduced by more than one-fifth out of its nearly 15,000, while

<sup>1</sup> The fortunes of the other islands increasingly approximated to those of the major colony. British Guiana and Honduras had markedly distinct histories of their own. Haiti, to be sure, stands quite by itself.

<sup>2</sup> *Post hoc* is not to be read as *propter hoc*; the religious reaction in the West Indies had other than material causes.



the constituency of St. Vincent and Demerara within the same period grew by nearly 1,000, accessions in Demerara and Barbados<sup>1</sup> more than balancing the heavy losses experienced in other Circuits.

Through the next decade the shrinkage of West Indian Methodism continued at much the same rate, the sum of membership diminishing between 1855 and 1866 from about 47,000 to 39,000. Half this heavy reduction was debited to Jamaica; nearly half the residue to the District of Antigua, Antigua itself and St. Kitts being conspicuous losers. The St. Vincent District (now separated from Demerara) was greatly impoverished, the Circuits of St. Vincent being robbed of half their former membership, while Barbados, which by its great advance had redeemed the District in the previous decade, now fell off almost as rapidly; the gains the Mission had made on the latter island previously seem to have been not very solid. Demerara stands out as the fruitful field of this season, its Church membership mounting up from 2,369 to close upon 3,200—a rate of increase, however, only keeping pace with the colony's growth in population. The statistics of the other smaller Districts show little change. Apart from Demerara, the entire period extending from 1846 to 1866 exhibits the same broad aspect of reaction or stagnation and spiritual arrest. Insufficiently taught and cared for, the emancipated Negroes had poorly used their liberty; they remained slaves to ignorance and vice. Instead of helping them to rise, their old masters kept them down by contempt and injustice, and by iniquitous legislation. The mother country, who had redeemed them from bondage, would not be further troubled with them until the tragedy of Morant Bay compelled her attention and brought her reforming hand to bear on the abuses that survived from the times of slavery. The civil and religious history of the islands ran a parallel course during the generations following 1833. The enthusiasm attending Liberation at first filled the Churches' ranks, multiplied their forces, and gave zest to their activities. But religion based on sentiment, without adequate knowledge and trained habits of life, invariably proves unstable.

<sup>1</sup> The Barbados membership more than doubled itself in the ten years, being reported in 1855 as above 4,000. The Church in Honduras multiplied from 207 to 874. (This station was still attached to Jamaica.) In the Bahamas, and in Haiti also, some ground was gained.

There was nevertheless much more than 'a remnant' left to Methodism of the good and faithful in these days of defection. While the general tide ebbed, here and there striking advances were made and cheering signs betokened Christ's presence with His people, and giving hope that the overcast skies would clear again. Thus on August 1, 1850, a new chapel was opened in the Blue Mountain Valley beneath the shadow of the loftiest heights in Jamaica, the erection of which was the fruit of a labour of love persisted in against overwhelming odds. Edward Fraser, then Superintendent of the Morant Bay Circuit, to which the Blue Mountain Society belonged, describes in the letter relating this happy event the self-denial and simple goodness of our poverty-stricken people in this isolated region, the all but insuperable hindrances in the way of providing them with a sanctuary, and the goodwill of the neighbouring Churches which helped to crown the sacred work. He acknowledges besides the liberal interest his English friends had taken in its accomplishment. On the other hand, letter after letter comes from Missionaries dolefully picturing the ruin coming on their chapels and the despair in which they look round for means to mend leaking roofs and foundations shaken by flood or earthquake.

The labour of the Missionaries was much increased in certain parts of Jamaica by the incoming of heathen Africans—some of these landed from the slave-ships captured by British cruisers and apprenticed to the sugar-estates, others imported under contract from the Guinea coast. Port Morant supplied a depôt for both classes of immigrants, and was called sometimes 'the Sierra Leone of Jamaica.' At other ports in north and west Jamaica, in the south Bahamas, and occasionally in the Leeward Isles, human cargoes were discharged on being rescued from slave-ships making for Cuba. These arrivals brought two evils with them: they cheapened labour, already far too cheap—an estate-manager near Port Morant boasted that he had by this means reduced his weekly wage-bill from £25 to £3—and they introduced a new stock of African fetishism. Hence the revival of Obeahism, noticeable in different quarters of the islands after the middle of the century. The stinting of education, the dispersal of the liberated Negroes through the mountainous recesses of the larger islands and their remoteness from civilizing influences, the discontent and squalor and

beastliness largely prevalent amongst them, supplied a soil all too favourable for the replanting of heathenism. The old Obeah superstition assumed, under the name of *Myalism*, imported by the new-comers, a form of witchcraft and magic, more virulent and immoral than that previously in vogue. In Haiti human sacrifices began to be practised, and Myalism acquired a general ascendancy over the Native mind, being secretly patronized even in the ruling circles of the Republic.

The visitations of cholera in 1851 and 1854 checked for a while the spread of irreligion. In Jamaica there was a reawakening of the fear of God amongst the people ; they felt His scourge upon them. Empty churches and chapels were filled ; penitents in numbers responded to the evangelists' appeals. Ministers toiled day and night in the double duty of tending the sick and dying—from whom others fled in fear—and directing the conscience-stricken living to their Saviour. But with the danger the fear commonly passed away ; the removal of the fell disease left a population decimated in number but not abidingly changed in spirit.

In 1860 a religious revival with no such painful antecedents broke out amongst the Jamaican Negroes, starting in the west—a sequel, apparently, of the revival that swept over the British Islands and North America in 1857–58. Great hopes were raised by this movement, which touched most of the Churches ; in some Circuits its effects proved sound and lasting. Jamaica showed on the returns of 1862 an increase of above 4,000 in its Methodist membership. The Circuits of Kingston, Montego Bay, Clarendon, and Yallahs were greatly stirred by the awakening. For a while the Missionaries' letters were sanguine and even jubilant in tone. But a false flame mingled with the fire of the Spirit. Reports became frequent of 'extravagance' and Antinomianism amongst the Native revivalists ; men and women pretending to inspiration and mocking at control brought fearful discredit upon the work of God. So the 1860 revival in many places came to an ignominious end ; the spate which flooded the channels of Methodism in the early sixties was followed by a return of the drought, when for seven years the waters ran continually lower and lower. Patient, incessant teaching and plenty of it, watchful discipline, unstinted and loving pastoral care, a

steady 'building up' in our most holy faith, were preconditions essential to a deep and sure revival of the work of God in a population like that of West Indian Negrodom—so emotionally unstable and so steeped in ignorance and sensuality, despite its surface knowledge of Christianity. On the failure of the revival followed the determined attempt made from home to reduce missionary expenditure, which brought the West Indian staff to the borders of despair. Immediately on this supervened the political crisis of 1865 in Jamaica.

Certain notable occurrences in other Districts helped to mark out the epoch of Chapters X. and XI. as severely critical—a time in which (as St. Paul would put it) 'the approved are made manifest,' when the 'wood, hay, stubble' that gather about the building of God's Church take fire, leaving the 'gold and precious stones' to abide the test. Such events the writer of missionary history might wish to ignore; but notice of them is necessary if we are to understand the course of things, and salutary where it illustrates the faults to which good and earnest men are liable, and the temptations besetting even the truest work for God in 'this present evil world.' The Antigua District had suffered from the lapse of several of its Missionaries at an earlier juncture; in the fifties again a succession of strifes amongst them wrought scandal and evil. The District in 1854 was, as it had been for a number of years past, under the Chairmanship of a revered and loved elderly Minister, who had given his life to the West Indian service; he has been mentioned with honour more than once in this History. His wife appears to have suffered from some mental derangement, which, in his judgement, necessitated their living apart. In the eyes of some of his brethren the separation was not justified, and a charge of misconduct was laid against him on this account. The matter excited public attention. It was discussed on all hands, and Methodist opinion in Antigua and elsewhere was sharply divided on the subject. In the West Indies unwholesome gossip is sure to fasten upon domestic troubles of this sort; disagreements amongst the Ministers are liable to become common property, and a crowd of wrangling partisans gathers round the disputants. This unhappy difference occasioned a cleavage in Antiguan Methodism which remained for years to come. The case was carried to London, and the Committee there appointed two senior Ministers from neighbouring



Districts to inquire and adjudicate upon it. They found the impeached Chairman innocent of moral blame, but advised his removal from his present District on grounds of expediency. He was accordingly appointed to another sphere, where he was welcomed, and had the prospect of much usefulness. But the trouble weighed painfully on his sensitive nature, and brought his life speedily to an end. His sad death, while it deepened the resentment of his friends, seems scarcely to have softened the asperity of his condemners ; the fires of contention smouldered on.

Four years later a new and almost gratuitous quarrel arose in the Antigua staff, while the former dispute still rankled. One of the senior Missionaries missed some important papers which he had under lock and key. In his inquiries about them he questioned a younger colleague in a manner betraying suspicion of him. The man assailed, instead of dismissing the suggestion with a quiet negative, burst into anger, replying with insult to insult. They were alike irascible and obstinate men ; neither would retract or apologize. The two were valuable Missionaries, but of incompatible temper, and they failed to realize the injury their wrangling must cause to the work of God. This case did not appeal to public sentiment like the former ; but it distressed and distracted the Ministers, occupying actually four days of the precious time of the Synod ! In the end the wretched business had to be referred to the disciplinary authorities in England. Both the antagonists incurred censure, and were removed to other Districts.

Nor were these the sole instances of painful division arising amongst the Antigua Missionaries about this time. It was due in part to the climate, but due also to the narrowing effect of life and work in the small islands, that differences of judgement and clashings of temper on this Mission Field were so liable to swell into quarrels and become public scandals. Petty sores festered and became dangerous wounds ; causes of friction, which to large-minded and kindly Christian men should never have given more than a moment's vexation, enkindled blazing controversies. ' Tea-cup storms ' were proverbially common in West Indian Society, and when Ministers set the example in this way, the people followed it with zest. The above incidents help to account for the continuous and heavy decrease of our constituency in the Leeward Islands, particularly at

head quarters in Antigua. Between 1846 and 1866 we lost close upon 1,000 out of our 2,700 Church members in the Antigua Circuit, and nearly 5,000 out of 14,000 in the District. At the later date the island of Antigua held actually 1,000 fewer Methodists than when Dr. Coke first landed there. Poverty and emigration had much to do with the decline ; but those causes told most seriously upon the poorer islands of the District,<sup>1</sup> and it would be mistaken to assign to them the whole responsibility for Methodist declension in this area.

The work of the Demerara Mission gave satisfaction to the Missionary Society when neighbouring Districts were causing disquiet or even dismay. Several circumstances favourable to progress in this colony have been pointed out. Much was due to the enterprising character of the Missionaries of the time in this field, of whom William Moister, James Bickford, James Banfield, John Greathead, Henry Hurd, William L. Binks, and David Barley may be named, and to the unity and discipline they maintained ; much also to the active support of the band of leading laymen who shared in the promotion of the Mission. There were fluctuations in the general advance of the years 1846 to 1866. Our Church numbered 2,159 members at the first of these dates ; five years later 2,524 ; after another five years 2,577 ; in 1861, 3,950 ; in 1866 the figure had dropped to 3,098. Under the fatherly, judicious, patient, and assiduous Chairmanship of Henry Hurd, during his superintendency in Georgetown, the District reached a high pitch of prosperity. Essequibo and Berbice first appeared on the list of Circuits in 1855.

The enterprising planters of Demerara before the end of the forties had introduced to their estates a swarm of coolies from the Far East, to meet a shortage of labour due here not so much to contention with the freed Blacks as to the rapid growth of the colony and its industries, which multiplied the demand, while the facilities for escape that the continental backwoods of Guiana afforded to restless Negroes diminished the supply. Early in 1848 the first intimation of the new need appears in the *Missionary Notices*. William English writes :

Can nothing be done by you, sirs [the Missionary Committee], to meet a necessity which exists in this colony ? I refer to the thousands

<sup>1</sup> Anguilla and St. Martin, Eustatius and St. Barts, were severally thrown into single Circuits, being supplied with two Ministers instead of four for economy's sake. They suffered much from this deprivation. Tortola and the Virgin Islands were affected most of all by the general impoverishment.

of coolies who are being brought here from India. It is piteous to see them on the different plantations—half-naked, idolatrous, unable to speak five words in English, yet prepared to receive with thankfulness any instruction you may impart to them. Brought to a strange country, the fascinating power [over them] of caste must to a great extent have been destroyed, and thus the great obstacle to their conversion must have been removed.<sup>1</sup> Could a Minister address them in their own dear language, I am persuaded that his influence amongst them for good would be immense. . . . Can you not send a Missionary to us here able to speak the language of India?

The above appeal marks the opening of a new chapter for Christian Missions in the American colonies. Bickford reports a little later the conversion of a Hindu from Trincomalie, in Ceylon, who had 'come here along with hundreds of his countrymen, foolishly expecting to find an El Dorado in the mud-plains and swamps of British Guiana—a young man of much intelligence, who writes an excellent hand and appears to have facility in translating the Scriptures from English into Tamil for the benefit of the coolies.' Taught in a Wesleyan Mission School, at home he had resisted Christian influences, which now, however, told upon him. It was hoped that Samuel Johnson (so the convert was named at his baptism) would be useful as an intermediary with his comrades and would prove the first-fruits of a great harvest.

John E. S. Williams, who had previously laboured amongst the Ceylonese Tamils for about six years, was the first Missionary set apart for the Demerara coolies; he arrived early in 1852. The Government subsidized this able man's work, and used him as its interpreter with the Tamils. In this capacity he rendered invaluable service, proving a true friend and defender to the often helpless strangers, while he sought to convey to them the light of the Gospel. Williams' unique ministry, so full of promise, was cut short by death in 1853; seven years of suspension for the work elapsed before his place was filled by the appointment of Henry V. P. Bronkhurst, a Native Minister of North Ceylon, whose name was long associated with the Demerara Coolie Mission. In 1866 Bronkhurst could report but 16 members of Society gathered in.

The planters of British Guiana valued education more than did those of the other neighbouring colonies. Missionary

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern immigrants were far less impressionable than the good Missionary imagined. Caste and Hinduism presented barriers to Christianity almost as hard to surmount in America as in Hindustan.

schools had been for some years liberally aided by its Government and Legislature, when in 1850 it was proposed to secularize the schools of the country. Stoutly resisted by the Methodists, along with the Anglicans and Presbyterians, the change was rejected after a keen discussion. Bickford took an active part in the opposition. The raising of this question at so early a period indicates the advanced development of British Guiana.<sup>1</sup>

Peculiar to the same colony was the clubbing together of the Blacks, who earned comparatively high wages here, to purchase derelict estates in order to work them by co-operation. Most of the companies thus formed excluded white men from holding shares in their properties. This action embarrassed the Missions, which in several instances were possessed of premises standing upon ground the negro associations had acquired, of which the latter sought to deprive them. The Law Courts, however, promptly invalidated all regulations contravening the customary rights of property in the colony.<sup>2</sup> The co-operative agriculture of the Demerara Blacks, if not always prosperous commercially, marked an important social advance.

From time to time rich visitations of the Divine grace came upon the District. David Barley describes such a season following Whitsuntide of the year 1856, when the Georgetown Ministers had agreed to preach to their people at this festival on the coming of the Holy Ghost, urging them to seek His influence, and to follow up the Sunday with a week of special services throughout the Circuit, including a central watchnight gathering.

It was soon evident [writes the reporter] that our noble band of leaders had received a baptism of the Spirit through their power to plead with God, their constancy in attending the means of grace, and their intense longing for the conversion of sinners ; nor did they plead in vain.

After another Sabbath, with its 'refreshing and quickening shower of grace.' the services were extended to a second week.

<sup>1</sup> See Bickford's *Autobiography*, pp. 79, 80.

<sup>2</sup> Bickford, as above, pp. 85-87. 'The Village System,' as the negro plan of joint-stock farming was called, was considerably modified in course of time. It prompted the planting out of groups of negro families in self-contained peasant communities, which, where sound moral leadership existed, developed favourably. Sir Henry Barkly, who ruled the colony at this period with admirable judgement and moderation, encouraged the experiment. Bickford greatly commends this Governor's statesmanship and geniality.



The Monday night prayer-meeting overflowed from the Trinity school-room into the chapel (Georgetown),<sup>1</sup> where the meeting had not proceeded long before it melted into 'a general weeping,' and several troubled souls 'found peace with God.' For six weeks the movement continued, quietly spreading amongst the populace. In four successive weeks, 18, 25, 26, and 43 new members were admitted into the Society on trial—upwards of 100 during the current quarter. For months conversions constantly took place at the seasons of public worship. John Greathead witnessed in Mahaica a similar manifestation of Divine power at the same Whitsuntide.

Cholera visited Demerara in the early fifties with like effects to those experienced in the islands. It decimated the Churches along with the general population, and brought fear-stricken crowds to seek the mercy of God at the house of prayer, some of whom became permanent converts. Many fell away when the terror was past. In 1857 the bold idea of establishing a Wesleyan Training College for schoolmasters in Demerara was mooted in the Synod. William Fidler at that time presided over the District (St. Vincent and Demerara), succeeding to William Hudson, from whom the project was inherited; David Barley, however, was its chief promoter.<sup>2</sup> The design was supported by a number of the enlightened Methodist laymen of Demerara, and was encouraged by the Government. In the following year the plan was matured, approved by the Synod (though the Chairman was dubious about it), and finally by the London Committee. The building was quickly taken in hand, and everything appeared to promise success. No such institution existed in the colony, and the need of it was strongly felt; other colonies, too, might share in its benefits, and were invited to contribute to the expense of foundation. The Demerara Circuits had grown to be nearly self-supporting, apart from their School grants, and the District felt itself entitled to look for aid from England in this important undertaking. Early in 1859 the fabric approached completion; the handful of Demerara teacher-students in training at the Mico Institution in Antigua were recalled in order to be placed here, and

<sup>1</sup> 'Trinity' and 'Kingston' are the names borne by the two oldest, and now venerable, centres of Methodism in this city.

<sup>2</sup> Barley, one of the foremost West Indian Missionaries in ability and influence, was the then Superintendent of the mother Circuit of Georgetown, in whose bounds the Training College was planted.

the first Government grant was received for the establishment.

A difference of judgement arose about the selection of Principal of the College. The choice of the Demerara Committee fell upon Mr. Stead, who was at the head of the Antigua Institute above-named, and had laboured for many years as schoolmaster in that island, where the education of the black people was better carried on than in any other part of the West Indies. Sidney Stead was a zealous Methodist intimate with a number of the Missionaries, and stood foremost among men of his profession in this part of the world ; above all, he was thoroughly versed in West Indian life and ways ; he was willing for the appointment, and almost counted upon it. He is described as ' a warm-hearted, outspoken Yorkshireman, apt to give offence '—the only fault alleged against him—' but trustworthy, loyal, and capable.' However, the London Committee saw reason to prefer another candidate ; they appear to have thought that for an institution of this nature a more modern head was desirable, imbued with the latest ideas of training and school management. So they sent out from England a young man named Warder, possessed of superior qualifications and well approved in character. He arrived in the course of that year, to find himself much disappointed with the building provided for his work—its situation, appearance, and unfinished state—with the number of students forthcoming, and with the local management. Things went amiss from the start, and the opening of the College was postponed till January, 1860, by which date four students were enrolled. At the same time disagreements arose about the contributions promised from the Georgetown Chapels in support of the College. Mr. Barley did his best to smooth over difficulties ; but he struggled in vain against the discontent of Principal Warder, who showed little disposition to accommodate himself to circumstances, against the apathy of the District Chairman, the slackness and inexperience of his lay helpers, and the complaints of the students.

The situation might have shaped very differently had the Principal made himself agreeable, and met patiently the inconveniences inevitable at the commencement of an enterprise entirely new and launched under the raw conditions of colonial life. Warder was invited to use for practising his students

the very efficient Day School in Georgetown, conducted by Mr. Savery, who had taught in it many years and held a high reputation in the colony. Warder wanted to revolutionize this establishment, the methods of which, he said, were out of date and incompatible with his system. Though Savery was friendly and willing to oblige the training-master, he could not see his way to adopt the radical changes required. The attitude of the new-comer in this matter gave sore offence. Moreover, Warder felt his position as a layman in the Mission service to be unsatisfactory ; without a seat in the Synod he had no voice in the affairs of the District with which his work was bound up ; his relations to District and Circuit officers were undignified, and gave rise to constant friction ; he was under the direction of men who knew little of educational principles and requirements ; he could not (he said) get his opinions and wishes properly attended to. These vexations he poured out in his letters to Bishopsgate, while he brooded over them at home, until he became thoroughly out of temper and out of heart. Barley, who on several points sympathized with the Principal and put down many of his troubles to the Chairman's (Fidler's) inertia, wrote to the latter in August, 1860 :

He [Warder] states that he has now lost all hope of being able to conduct College matters with anything like success ; that nothing but difficulties await him ; that he has resolved to struggle on till his period of notice expires,<sup>1</sup> and then leave for England.

Barley greatly deprecates his withdrawal and the abandonment of the College, which would be a severe blow to the Mission and to the cause of education in the colony ; the terms on which the managers stand with the Government bind them to persevere.

Barley's hope that Warder would, after all, settle down to his work was not fulfilled. In January, 1861, the Secretaryship of the College passed from his hands into those of Henry Hurd, who succeeded to the Georgetown superintendency, the former being transferred to St. Vincent. Through Fidler's continued decline in health the administration of the District, the affairs of which had fallen into much confusion, devolved

<sup>1</sup> Three months' notice of resignation had been given by Warder to Fidler at the end of the previous June ; the former declared six weeks later that he had received no acknowledgement of this communication.

also on Hurd. So soon as the Synod was over Hurd made a final attempt to conciliate Warder and to save the Training College; but the aggrieved man would not be mollified; he had already sent to the Missionary Committee his written resignation. Mr. Hurd wrote to the same quarter giving his views of the case, which he discussed with much kindness and wisdom, and advising that, if Warder insisted on throwing up his post, Stead of Antigua should be invited to take it. Warder lingered on at Georgetown in a sullen, impracticable mood, while his students slipped away. The College became an object of ridicule in the public press. The London Committee had delayed action, hoping against hope to retain the Principal of their choice. At the end of 1861 Warder removed with his family, leaving the College empty and discredited. No attempt was made to reopen it; in a short time the building was appropriated for other purposes. The experiment, which began so hopefully and promised great benefits to Methodism and the colony, had failed almost ignominiously, through over-haste, disunion, and defective management on the part of its promoters—most of all through the unsuitability of the Principal first selected. Its breakdown immediately lowered the prestige of Methodism in the colony. This misfortune, coupled with other mishaps referable to Chairman Fidler's impaired health and inefficiency, put an arrest on the advance of British Guiana District, whose affairs a few years before had worn so blooming an aspect.

Loyal and liberal as a number of the well-to-do laymen of the District were, including not only Europeans—English, Scotch, and Dutch<sup>1</sup>—but the coloured gentlemen besides, the Missionaries complained here, as in other West Indian fields, of their obstinate refusal to engage in stewardships and the charge of Circuit and District finance. Hurd writes :

I have now been nearly twenty-five years in this District and I have never known, with a single exception, any layman willing to undertake the duties devolving upon Circuit officers at home, though I have sought them at every place.

<sup>1</sup> Chief amongst the Dutch Methodists of the colony was Meinhaard Johannes Retemeyer, Her Majesty's Receiver-General for Guiana—a man of eminent position and noble character, and a most devout, humble, charitable Christian, honoured and revered almost beyond any other person in Georgetown. Bickford, who knew this good gentleman well and ministered to him on his death-bed, wrote a memoir of his life, which appeared in the *W.M. Magazine* for 1852. See also the *Autobiography*, pp. 64, 65.



He wishes one of the Bishopsgate Secretaries would come out to see for himself how things really are. This might silence unjust censures on this score directed against the Missionaries, who would be only too glad to hand over the purse of the Church to any trustworthy keeper. The few laymen willing to help in this line—some of whom complained that their services were declined—were palpably unfit.

Demerara, which had a good Methodist reputation in other ways, lagged behind the islands in liberality to Foreign Missions—an inferiority hard to account for. Towards the close of the American War this colony, after its long course of exceptional prosperity, fell into deep commercial depression. Government salaries and school grants were reduced. Circuit finances and the maintenance and necessary extensions of Church plant became correspondingly difficult. The Church membership at the same time underwent also a considerable decline. Hurd advised keeping the Mission staff low until the times should improve. Notwithstanding this serious check, he regarded Georgetown as coming to be 'the most important station' for Methodism 'in the West Indies.' The division of the St. Vincent and Demerara District<sup>1</sup> was made at that juncture by the Missionary Committee, over the heads of the Missionaries. It had the advantage of saving much time and expense in travelling, but the drawback for the Demerara men of limiting the area of their Circuit changes and cutting them off from the more salubrious climate of the Windward Isles. A dispute between senior Missionaries of the new District, which occasioned a Minor Synod and resulted in appeals to England and the withdrawal of one of the men concerned, overclouded the close of the present period (1855-66). The rapid progress made by Demerara Methodism in the previous decade had come to an end.

We have dwelt as fully as space permits on the more important centres of activity and the more decisive and significant events marking the middle third of the nineteenth century in the West Indian fields. For the rest, our references must be altogether slight and cursory. Where Popery was in the ascendant—as in Trinidad, Grenada, Dominica, Montserrat—Methodism made slow progress; in such localities its adherents, if not very numerous, were usually of a valuable type, intelligent and

<sup>1</sup> Henry Bleby was the first Chairman of the Demerara section.

strongly convinced. Their scanty numbers and deficiency in educational appliances put the Missionaries at a great disadvantage in face of the array of Romanist priests and nuns. For the size of its population, Grenada suffered more cruelly from the attacks of cholera in 1851 and 1854 than any other West Indian area. For the time the island was half-ruined; Methodism lost the best of its Class-leaders and Local Preachers. The little island of Nevis, which under Britten's pastorate had prospered so much religiously, was favoured with a succession of the best Missionaries the Antigua District afforded. On the whole it maintained its high position, though the Circuit failed through poverty to retain the status of self-support reached during the forties. Theophilus Gregory, writing in 1861, describes a strange revival of Obeahism, attended with a Satanic outburst of immorality, which infected the Methodist Society along with the body of the Nevis Negroes. The numerous cases of discipline thence arising 'have,' he says, 'consumed my time, depressed my spirits, and sickened my heart.' Referring to the same outbreak, Tregaskis writes: 'The horror of the situation could hardly be exaggerated.' He blames his predecessors for lax dealing with the evil in its earlier stages. For this relapse the lack of education was to a great extent answerable. Ere long a gracious revival of the work of God in Nevis swept out the hideous recrudescence.

In St. Eustatius the friendly relations established between the Mission and the Dutch Government continued; our Church in this little island commanded the attachment of the people, both Dutch and English, White and Black. Wealth and population alike had dwindled here in comparison with former glory. The liberation of the slaves in the Dutch colonies came about in 1863.

For the French half of St. Martin emancipation was suddenly effected through the Revolution of 1849 in the mother country. The change agitated the slaves of Dutch St. Martin, numbers of whom fled across the border to snatch their liberty. It was observed that not a man out of the hundreds of Methodist Negroes on Dutch territory took advantage of this opportunity.

The neighbour-island of Anguilla, amongst whose people the Mission had flourished in former years, was now sunk in dire poverty, and much reduced in population. The St. Martin and Anguilla Circuits were placed under the care of a single

Minister ; in 1866 they reported conjointly 620 Church members, as against the 973 of twenty years earlier. The behaviour of the Methodist flocks in this poor poverty-wasted and neglected group of islands (including St. Barts) during the long period of depression in the Church was admirable ; they showed in truth a better spirit, and maintained a higher moral level than did the large Societies of the comparatively well-to-do islands in the Antigua District. The Tortola (Virgin Islands) Circuit should be included in this commendation ; nowhere were the Negroes found more heartily and faithfully devoted to the cause of Christ. And the Tortolans were cheerful givers, although the poorest folk in the whole West Indies ; in the hardest times they came near to supplying the full maintenance of their ministry.

The decline of Methodism during the later forties and the fifties was nowhere perhaps so painfully evident as in St. Vincent. The fact that this island was amongst the earliest centres and chief strongholds of the Mission, and the head quarters of a wide District, made the falling off the more conspicuous and lamentable. David Barley, returning to the Kingstown Circuit in 1861 after twelve years' absence, observes a sorrowful change in the condition of Kingstown Chapel and Society ; ' the depressing aspects of the comparison have exceeded my expectation—a half-empty instead of a crowded chapel ; the poorer members gone ; the mass of the humbler classes who once belonged to us, no longer with us ; pew-rents, class and ticket-moneys, Society-membership—all reduced by much more than a half.' Barley, however, sees ' a brighter day dawning.' Speaking for himself and his colleague, John C. Barratt, he says :

We have returned to the old plan of visiting every estate and every village in the bounds of the Circuit, and are systematically meeting the people at their homes. We are also regularly preaching thrice on the Sabbath, one of the services being in the open air, both in town and country.<sup>1</sup>

The tide of decrease, both in membership and finance, appeared to have been stemmed.

The causes making against the Mission elsewhere operated in St. Vincent also—the desolating visitations of cholera and

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph implies some negligence in the above respects on the part of predecessors.

smallpox ; commercial distress, and extreme poverty amongst the Negroes ; retrenchment on the part of the Missionary Society, and the consequent reduction of the ministerial staff and of educational grants. The diminution and weakening of the schools struck a deadly blow at our work throughout the islands—the more so in St. Vincent, because to supply additional labour for the plantations large numbers of Africans had been imported, who brought a re-infusion of heathenism. A Missionary from the Biabou Circuit writes in 1850 that he had been ‘ obliged to expel 150 members for amalgamating heathenish customs in the forms of Christianity, and for following their animal feelings and mental whims in opposition to the revealed Word of God.’

But there were other hindrances to the ‘ running well ’ of St. Vincent Methodists not to be overlooked. In 1857 a Missionary writes : ‘ The declension of our Societies generally on the island may be mainly attributed to the intolerant spirit of the Anglican clergy.’

Ecclesiastical warfare played a characteristic part in damaging the Methodist Church and the cause of religion in St. Vincent. It would seem, however, that some of the Missionaries were themselves gravely at fault, and the Georgetown Rector had not always to watch for their halting. Henry Bleby, who became Chairman of this District in 1863, was a fearless censor of his brethren. He wrote reporting of the Synod of 1861 :

The fact is that the moral influence of our Mission in that beautiful island (St. Vincent) has been greatly impaired by a series of disastrous cases of ministerial unfaithfulness.

In this connexion he referred to instances occurring

during the last twelve years of known or suspected habits of intemperance, or still grosser immorality, which have cast a blight over our Churches there and have contributed more than all other causes together to produce that decline in our Circuits which we have deplored for years past.

How had ‘ the fine gold become dim ’ ? This defection in the missionary ministry—only paralleled by the apostasies of thirty years earlier at Antigua—was the root of the trouble at this sorrowful time in St. Vincent, and furnishes the main explanation of the melancholy figures quoted above from David Barley. Bleby guards his painful reflections by adding :



' These remarks do not apply to any Minister now in the District . . . scarcely to any we have now in the work ' ; the roots of bitterness, he believes, had been cast out.

The hope of revived prosperity cherished in 1861 was blasted by the negro rising of the following year in St. Vincent. The ill-feeling between the races which burst forth so terribly in Eastern Jamaica three years later had grown intense in this island. John C. Barratt, writing to Bishopsgate, imputes the outbreak to oppression and irregular wages.

The quarrel throughout has really been between the managers and labourers. . . . If the people were treated kindly, I believe they would conduct themselves satisfactorily ; but in many instances they have been so badly used that the wonder is they did not kick long ago !

The riot started on an estate where the manager was exceptionally overbearing and tyrannical and lost no opportunity of insulting the work-people. The latter struck against a diminution of wages<sup>1</sup> and ' privileges.' Rapidly the movement spread ; bands of Negroes went about beating white men who fell into their hands. The island blazed with incendiary fires. Though they uttered atrocious threats, the strikers did not proceed to murder. The Lieutenant-Governor met them and reasoned with them, promising inquiry and redress. For a day or two they were quieted ; then doubt arising as to the assurances given, the disturbances broke out afresh. On September 30 martial law was proclaimed ; a ship-of-war shortly arrived to aid the scanty local forces. In three weeks the rebellion was got under, and martial law was suspended. One hundred and sixty-eight prisoners were arrested and tried, and drastic punishment was meted out to the condemned ; but the military authorities stopped short of the butcheries and burnings subsequently perpetrated in Jamaica.

While the actual rioters were but a few hundreds, the bulk of the St. Vincent Blacks were in sympathy with them, and resented with implacable anger the savage floggings inflicted on comrades who had been goaded into rebellion by long-continued bullying and outrage.

Worship and Church life, as well as ordinary business, were

<sup>1</sup> The ordinary pay was four dollars a month (less than £1) ; this it was proposed to cut down to three dollars !

almost suspended during the rebellion. Collections and contributions from the people ceased through the larger part of the island, and Ministers were in the greatest straits. Though few professed Methodists were implicated in acts of lawlessness, many of the Societies were quite unhinged; a large fraction of the Church membership was lost during that year, and Methodist finances, then just beginning to improve, were threatened with bankruptcy. The St. Vincent Circuits were compelled to throw themselves on English charity, which came to their help in the desperate emergency.

The conflicts of 1862 inflamed the Negroes against all white folk<sup>1</sup>; earnestly as they sought to befriend the people and to restore peace, since they insisted on obedience to the law, the Missionaries did not escape the popular resentment. In the minds of some of the black leaders a strange mixture was observed of hereditary heathenism with revolutionary notions about equality and the rights of man. Christianity was attacked, and the wildest slanders were circulated against Missionaries.<sup>2</sup> 'The people have been taught industriously of late,' writes Barratt, 'to regard their Ministers as their enemies.' This estrangement, which had no parallel in the Jamaica troubles of 1865, was for the Mission the saddest feature of the St. Vincent outbreak—an attitude the reverse of that prevailing between the Blacks of the island and the Methodist Missionaries.<sup>3</sup> It took a long time, and no small pains and trouble, to restore the old happy relations. Hardly any race-conflict occurring at any time in the West Indies was marked by a more bitter animus than this. In the year 1866 the Methodist membership of St. Vincent had fallen below 3,000, where twenty years earlier it came within 200 of 7,000!

The new scale of stipends, the proposal of which in 1864 by the Missionary Committee so greatly tried the Missionaries of Jamaica, was anxiously considered in the St. Vincent District also. Here, however, it was received with greater equanimity.

<sup>1</sup> In this case, exceptionally, the coloured people were identified with the Whites by the exasperated Negroes.

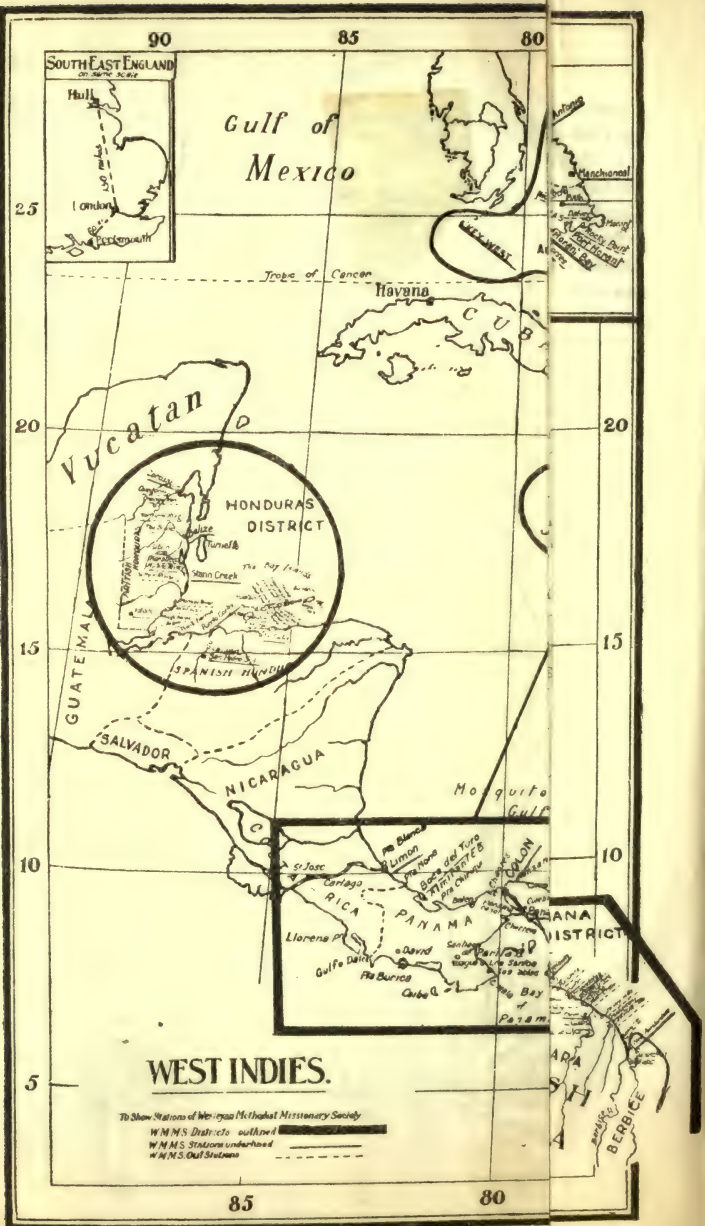
<sup>2</sup> 'You will understand,' says Barratt to his correspondent, 'the feelings of men who have heard, and *believe*, that their Ministers have publicly said: "Fourpence a day is quite enough for black labourers!"'

<sup>3</sup> One is disposed to think that the misconduct of certain degenerate Missionaries, to which Bleby alluded a little earlier, and the consequent mistrust engendered, played their part in the train of calamities. Barley noted at this time the desertion of the Kingstown Methodist Chapel by the poorer Blacks, who had formerly thronged it.

Hurd, who was now the Chairman, discusses it in a long, temperate, and convincingly reasoned letter addressed to the Secretaries, which embodied the judgement of the Synod ; he approves the principle of substituting a fixed stipend, adjusted to the family position and necessities of each class of Ministers, for fluctuating 'allowances' ; but he contends that the estimates on which the rate of stipend is based are in several important particulars below the mark. Hurd's calculations evidently impressed the Mission House and helped to correct its views.







## XII

### THE PRE-CONFERENCE PERIOD

#### (JAMAICA AND ST. VINCENT DISTRICTS AND BRITISH GUIANA)

Jamaica—Self-Support—Encouraging Pronouncements—Church Membership—Drought and Hurricane—George Sargeant—York Castle and Andrew Kessen—A West Indian Constitution—Emigration to Panama—A Division of Judgement. St. Vincent—Financial Difficulties—Years of Revival and Hope—Trinidad, Tobago, and Grenada—A difficult Field. British Guiana—Deficient Leadership—Financial Confusion—Effects of Coolie Immigration.

FROM the year 1866 Methodist interests in the West Indies began to revive. The Native Churches recovered their tone ; the sullen mood of discontent into which the Negroes had fallen passed away ; the letters and reports of the Missionaries became hopeful and animated once more. Gradually in the course of the seventies the prospect of independence dawned on the Church, as one Circuit after another became self-supporting and several Districts multiplied their local institutions, and Methodism assumed a more settled and developed form in this field of its long-continued operations.

Two communications relating to the pre-Conference period (1866-84) reflect the renewed confidence characterizing the Methodist leaders, and describe the progress now manifest in the JAMAICA DISTRICT. The first is a speech delivered by George Sargeant in 1872, in which he contrasts the state of Jamaica as he found it on his recent return from England compared with that in which he left the island ten years before :

The old political régime of Governor Eyre [he says] had given way to the firm and skilful government of Sir John P. Grant. Though the people were taxed as heavily as ever, and perhaps to a little greater extent, they were contented and happy, believing that in the form of good government they got value received for their money. . . . The

great question in this country was whether the black people would make the best of their circumstances ; were they growing in intelligence, and would they improve in circumstances ? . . . He could say, on a pretty extensive experience for twenty-five years past, that there were all the signs of improvement the best friends of Jamaica could desire, in agricultural, commercial, and general temporal matters. The growing wealth of the country was clearly indicated by the fact that the Treasury had for several years past shown a surplus of many thousands of pounds, as against the many thousands deficiency of former years. When he left Jamaica thirteen years ago, nearly the whole of the corn consumed by the country came from America (U.S.A.) ; when he went back he could rarely get a bag of American corn anywhere ! A prominent speaker had lately suggested the West Indian Districts being placed under a West Indian Conference ; he (G. S.) saw no insuperable difficulty to a consummation so devoutly to be wished. Not that they were tired of the mild rule of Bishopsgate Street, nor of the support that came from that quarter ; but he did believe that home rule would be good for the Methodist people in Jamaica. It would call into existence a sort of responsibility, and evoke a power, that would be beneficial to the Churches.

This pronouncement from the Chairman of the Jamaica District, and the most representative and influential Methodist Minister in the islands, brought the question of the establishment of a West Indian Conference fairly ' on the carpet.'

The other statement we will quote in evidence of the rallying of Methodism and its renewed advance, between the time of the Port Morant outbreak and the formation of the West Indian Conferences, is extracted from the review taken by Robert Raw in writing to the Mission House of his fifteen years of service on leaving Jamaica for England in 1879.<sup>1</sup> Raw was a man of strenuous character, excellent abilities, sound sense, and resolute industry, who contributed his full share to the progress he describes.

The Ministers [he writes] have displayed an aggressive spirit, and the record of their successful labours for the consolidation of Methodism . . . will compare favourably with any similar record elsewhere. By a vigorous effort, in which we were assisted from the Home Jubilee Fund, all our Chapel debts have been liquidated. A number of chapels had been slenderly built at an early period, or had become too small for the congregations, or sunk into dilapidation ; about twenty of these

<sup>1</sup> Robert Raw divided almost equally his thirty-three years in the ministry between foreign and home service. He had enjoyed as a student the benefit of Dr. Kessen's tuition for fifteen months. The characterization of his obituary—' a thorough Christian gentleman, a thoughtful Preacher, a diligent pastor, a most painstaking and indefatigable worker '—applies alike to Raw's West Indian and English career. He died at Otley in 1896.

have given place to larger and more substantial edifices. . . . These represent an outlay of perhaps £12,000 ; and our Jamaica people have contributed the money, with the exception of about £500 granted by the Home Committee. . . . No fewer than sixteen new stations . . . have been added to our different Circuits. To all this add repairs and improvements to numerous other chapels, and the erection of Mission houses, school-rooms, and teachers' cottages, and you have before you that which indicates both earnest labour on the part of your Missionaries and cheerful co-operation on the part of our people, as also the prospering blessing of God.

I have laid special stress [he continues] on the material aspect of our Church progress, because building work in this island presses heavily on the Ministers, who are obliged very often to charge themselves with the supervision of such affairs and to journey hundreds of miles per annum to see after their property. Our Day Schools are four times as good, both in numbers and efficiency, as they were fifteen years ago ; and the membership of our Church has increased by about 4,000. . . . I am fully persuaded that our prosperity is due in some measure to our esteemed Chairman [Sargeant], who by geniality and suavity has encouraged his brethren in their work, and by his popular gifts as a Preacher has sustained our credit in the island. . . . Now that we have a High School and a Theological Institution and are about to establish a Girls' High School, the position of Chairman in this District is one of great importance. . . . Jamaica must give the keynote to West Indian Methodism.

Raw had received a copy of the draft forwarded from Bishopsgate Street of the constitution proposed for the West Indian Conference, now in contemplation. He takes objection, as his brethren did in other quarters, to the association of laymen, at the present stage of Circuit development, with Synod and Conference business.

One has too much respect [he says] for his Circuit Steward to take him to Synod to audit accounts over which he has no control, since the Superintendent Ministers are directly responsible to the Committee in all financial matters.

I rejoice at the prospect of such changes as will bring laymen and Ministers into close union in the management of our affairs, and will make us more in harmony both with English Methodism and with other religious bodies in this country. Nevertheless I deprecate, as fraught with peril, the idea of handing over to individual Circuits the control of financial affairs. We have very few Circuits that are capable of local management ; to entrust them indiscriminately with such responsibility would jeopardize interests that have cost you much. . . . What I advocate, as a tentative and prudential measure, is the formation of a (District) Finance Committee consisting of sundry Ministers and intelligent laymen, to exercise the supervision and control which the London Committee seems inclined to transfer to our Circuits. . . . Such



a measure would give the laity a fair degree of control over monetary affairs, and would prove a safeguard against those evils which, I fear, would result from unrestricted Circuit action. Few, if any, of the English Missionaries will object to the plan proposed by me ; but I feel certain they will all decline to be handed over to the tender mercies of Circuits in which there are few people capable of appreciating their social status, and which, if entrusted with power, might plunge their ministry into financial embarrassment and degrade Methodism in public estimation. If necessary, I could adduce admonitory instances of the evil I deprecate from the other Churches of Jamaica.

Manifestly, the working out of plans for self-government in West Indian Methodism was going to be no easy matter. The crux of the whole difficulty lay in the wretchedly uneducated state of the negro and coloured people, which there had been hitherto no adequate effort on the part of Government and the Churches to remedy.

The commercial activity and financial betterment which Sargeant found so marked on his return to the colony about the year 1870 was not indeed of long continuance, but the religious progress he witnessed persisted through times of misfortune and straitness. The Church membership of this District steadily grew between 1866 and 1882 from 14,576 in number to 18,524 ; half-way between these dates it stood at 16,085. It may be useful to compare with the above figures the position of the other Districts comprehended in the Conference scheme at the three successive points above mentioned. The Antigua District remained for eight years stationary, its membership returns in 1866 and 1874 being respectively 9,501 and 9,559—by 1882 it had risen to 10,921 ; the St. Vincent District (including Demerara) rallied in the first half of the period, advancing from 7,078 in membership to 8,439, but halted in the second half, at the end of which its figure was but 8,538 ; British Guiana (Demerara) advanced and then retreated—the successive figures on the given dates being 3,098, 4,255, 3,655 ; Haiti began with 222 Methodist Church members, and ended with 609 (not reckoning Turk's Island). It was the stride forward made by *Jamaica* which chiefly encouraged the Missionary Society to enter on the Conference project.

The Jamaica District was under the influence at this period of a great leader. George Sargeant had laboured earlier for thirteen years (1847–60) on this field ; for the next decade he ministered in England. In 1869 the Missionary Committee

reappointed him to preside over the District in place of John Mearns, whose health had given way. Sargeant was compelled to return two years later, and the devoted William West took his place ; but West soon broke down, and Sargeant resumed the post, which he filled to admiration for another eight years. His experience, tact, and geniality, his robust and hearty personality, and the rare combination in him of intellectual and spiritual power with administrative skill, gave him a unique ascendancy, which he exercised with the meekness of wisdom. He infused his energy and sanguine spirit into the entire work of the Mission. Sargeant had the ear of the whole Jamaica public, and his general popularity gave a weight to his Church in colonial affairs such as it has seldom enjoyed. He set his heart on seeing Methodism in the West Indies independent ; his exhortations to the people in the islands on the subject, and his representations to the home Committee and Church, had a decisive influence in furthering the measures adopted toward this end. More than any other man, George Sargeant was the father of the West Indian Conferences.

Two important educational foundations originated under Sargeant's leadership, designed to give stability to Methodism in Jamaica and an equipment for the larger responsibilities coming upon it with self-maintenance and self-government. Chief of these was the *York Castle High School for Boys and Theological College*, opened in 1875. The need of such an institution had been felt for a generation past ; by a determined effort it might, surely, have been set on foot in the early hopeful years after Emancipation, when money was lavished on almost a prodigal scale upon chapel building. ' York Castle ' was a spacious house built on the top of a mountain 2,000 feet high, a spur of the central ridge of the island looking northwards toward St. Ann's Bay, from which the site was about twelve miles distant. To the house an estate of 800 acres was attached, laid out for pimento-growing and cattle-grazing. The situation was healthy and bracing, and commanded a glorious view. It had the disadvantage of bad communications, being four miles from the nearest village and post-office, while it was sixty miles remote from Kingston. The roads of the neighbourhood were execrable ; travelling and transport to the place were difficult and costly. The existing premises required much alteration to adapt them to the new purposes, and the

necessary work was far from finished when the School was opened.<sup>1</sup> Even the carriage-way through the grounds, extending to a mile's length of steep climbing, was unmade ; nothing on wheels could reach the house. In the West Indies contract-work was rarely done to time.

The Missionary Committee at home, which took a warm interest in this adventure, persuaded Andrew Kessen, A.B., LL.D., to undertake the headship of the Jamaica Institution, chiefly with a view to the training of the young Native Ministers it was intended to gather there. Dr. Kessen was the most distinguished Methodist missionary scholar then living. The son of a Minister of the Scottish Kirk and a graduate of Glasgow University, entering the Wesleyan ministry in 1840, he had laboured for fifteen years in Ceylon, for several years taking the direction of the National Normal Institution at Colombo. His abilities were in high esteem with the Ceylon Government, which offered him a permanent place on its Staff. On his return to England Dr. Kessen was employed by the Missionary Committee, until the establishment of the Richmond Missionary College in 1868, in the tuition of young Missionaries designated for the East. He was master of Cingalese, and had a wide knowledge of languages ; his general scholarship was of a high order, including rare proficiency in mathematics. Being now advanced in life and in frail health, the return to the tropics and the undertaking of a founder's task were hazardous for Dr. Kessen ; but he yielded to the solicitation, and in January, 1876, reached his new sphere. This was the first High School in Jamaica, if not in the West Indies, without the colour bar ; its opening excited universal attention. The Government looked on the experiment with friendly interest and favoured its success. The names of thirty boarders were entered for the first term ; two theological students were forthcoming. A probationer Minister from England, William Westlake, was granted Dr. Kessen as his Assistant ; this young man was to relieve him of the details of school organization and management, so that he might be free for general oversight and theological instruction.

The intentions of the promoters were excellent, as were their

<sup>1</sup> The property, unoccupied for some years, had been cheaply bought ; nevertheless, a debt of several thousands of pounds was incurred in the purchase and initial outlay, the discharge of which was to be effected through the prosperous working of the school.

plans in many respects. But an unfortunate start was given to the School through the delay which arose in the preparations. The assurances given to the Missionary Committee that everything would be ready at York Castle when Dr. Kessen arrived were far from being realized. A body of Local Governors had been formed, on which the laymen of the District were represented; but it was the misfortune of our Church in the islands to be always short of competent helpers of this order, and everything practically devolved on the Chairman of the District, who was engaged with a crowd of other duties. Mr. Sargeant could not keep his eye on the workmen at York Castle; moreover, he had little experience of the equipment for a Boarding and High School. Hence when Dr. and Mrs. Kessen reached York Castle, shortly before the date appointed for the coming of the boys, they found chaos prevailing and indispensable requisites lacking in the way of furniture and appliances and domestic staff. In some sort of fashion a beginning was, however, made; but under the extreme discomfort and strain of the household conditions, added to the difficulty of setting in train the school-work and establishing discipline, of creating the new community from raw unprepared material, the Principal's health and strength rapidly declined from the outset. It soon was evident that Dr. Kessen must lay down the burden he had assumed.

Somehow the school scrambled through its first term, and the holidays brought relief to the distressingly overwrought Principal. He resumed work with some hope of being able to continue it under improved conditions; but the disabling symptoms reappeared, and Dr. Kessen was compelled to submit to the medical verdict that his continuance in the tropics, in any such office as that he occupied, was impossible. He and his devoted wife sailed for England in October, after nine months of a brave but physically hopeless attempt.

Dr. Kessen won the affection and obedience of the lads under his charge, rude and untoward as many of them were; he impressed on them the beginnings of orderly and studious habits; his loving force of will few could resist. He was a born teacher, with a gift for awakening latent capacity and imparting interest to any subject he touched. The people flocked to hear him preach, and he brought to the ministry of Jamaica a dignified learning and venerable piety such as it had scarcely



exhibited hitherto. The work of the pastor-schoolmaster was that best suited to his tastes and powers ; had the material conditions of his work been tolerable, he might have laboured at York Castle for many years, and built up a great school for Methodist Jamaica. Alas, this was not to be ! Dr. Kessen returned to England deeply disappointed ; he found himself unequal to the resumption of Circuit work, and three years later passed away, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, after a life of incessant toil in sacred study and the full spending of his powers of mind and heart on the bettering of his fellow men.

The young colleague who had accompanied Dr. Kessen from England retired from the York Castle appointment soon after him. The school must have been closed but for the coming shortly before Dr. Kessen's departure of John Thackray, B.A., who had been sent out in the spring on Kessen's and Sargeant's entreaty, to relieve the failing Principal. At sight of the state of York Castle the new-comer was in despair, and would have returned home without unpacking his goods ; to carry on a Boarding School with premises and staff as they were was out of the question. However, he was persuaded to make the trial—one could not desert Dr. Kessen in such a plight—and he took charge of the house and school on his removal. Thackray was a strong, capable, and loyal young man ; he put all his energy into the effort to pull things together, and was able to hand the establishment over, in 1877, to Kessen's successor in working order, with something of an established reputation, and with a revenue balancing the expenditure.

The new head, John Richard Hargreaves, appointed from England under the title of ' Governor and Chaplain,' was a Minister of high standing in the home ranks still in the prime of life—a commanding Preacher and an incisive debater in Synod and Conference.<sup>1</sup> Without the scholastic training and experience of Kessen, Hargreaves possessed culture and wide reading, and had shown a special interest in English educational questions ; in range of ability he was fully competent for the headship of the York Castle Institution. But he was found wanting in finance and administration ; when he returned to England through failure of health in 1879 the accounts were found in a tangle and the school plunged in debt. Censure fell

<sup>1</sup> Hargreaves was originally enlisted by George Sargeant as a *preacher* for Kingston pulpits ; his appointment to York Castle was an afterthought.

upon Hargreaves from various quarters, but official inquiry cleared him of moral blame. The two initial breakdowns in the Principalship, happening within three years, clouded the prospects of York Castle.

On Hargreaves' departure Sargeant undertook the oversight of the High School *pro tempore*, and set himself to relieve its financial embarrassment. In 1881 William Clarke Murray (who became Dr. Murray in course of time) was made 'Governor and Theological Tutor.' Under his direction, continued for many years, the Institution gained stability and a good measure of educational success. Murray was probably the ablest Minister the West Indian Church had produced since Edward Fraser. Of British blood and island birth, Murray was not a man of brilliant talent nor University training; but he had made excellent use of good natural powers. He combined a sound judgement and wide knowledge of men and things with superior tact and temper; during his twenty-three years of Circuit work in Jamaica he had earned respect and confidence on all hands. Dr. Clarke Murray filled all the chief offices of the Western West Indian Conference, and played a strenuous part in its affairs. He lived to see the work in the islands revert to the jurisdiction of the British Conference, under which he died in harness in 1909, completing a fruitful ministerial course of more than half a century.

While the economic condition of the islands steadily worsened and the finances of Methodism became increasingly difficult, the Churches in other respects continued to advance. In 1881 Sargeant reviews the state of the Jamaica District, in prospect of his return to England, in the following terms:

Ten years ago the 'Rest-and-be-thankful' policy gave place to one somewhat boldly aggressive. This by the blessing of God has been successful to such an extent that, despite the agricultural and commercial depression to which the colony has been subject during that period, there has been a steady increase in every department of our Church work, exceeding that of the preceding thirty years. The total annual income has gone steadily up from £10,000 to £20,000.

Time was when both the Native and the European here had some vague notion that success or failure, especially in relation to finance, was more an affair of the [Missionary] Committee than theirs! That time has passed. . . . How the sense of responsibility can be increased, and the practical shape it will take, are just now questions of the first importance.

The draft scheme of the West Indian Constitution sent out from London contemplated a great increase of Circuit responsibility and self-government, assimilating colonial to British practice; in reference to this Sargeant writes:

Up to the present time the District Meeting has by reason of its special financial relation to the Committee kept a firm hand upon every item of Circuit expenditure. . . . According to the new régime this District control must cease and independent action of the Quarterly Meeting must take its place. In this it is thought [by the Synod] lies our danger. . . . In the greater part of the Quarterly Meetings the extremely limited views of our lay brethren as to affairs of business would throw the whole power practically into the hands of the Ministers, who may be young, inexperienced in Church government, and very often seriously so *in matters of finance*.

To guard against this very real and frequent liability of the West Indian Circuits 'there must be some power outside the Circuit, some central authority analogous to that which has hitherto existed.' The home Committee, especially its laymen, affected by the recent introduction of lay representation into the British Conference, urged the entrusting of greater power to the West Indian laity. They believed that trustworthiness would grow with responsibility, that self-support and the capacity for self-government could only be developed in the people by giving them control of their own affairs, and that it was worth while running some risk for so great a gain. They suspected in the Missionaries an unconscious disposition to retain Church business in their own hands and to keep the Natives in leading-strings. The English Missionaries on their part—especially the older amongst them—deprecated the handling of Church moneys by the Negroes and the committing of business to them; they had sad experiences to quote of experiments made in this direction. For such reasons the majority of them were opposed to the setting up of West Indian Conferences, judging their people still unripe for independence. Sargeant, whose cautions on the subject we have quoted, was exceptionally sanguine about the issue.

To fill Sargeant's place in the Jamaica Chair was difficult. Thomas Middleton Geddes appeared the most eligible man on the ground; he served as Acting Chairman when Sargeant sailed for England in the course of 1881. Geddes' ability services, and character were held in honour by

every one ; but the English brethren regarded him as partial to the Natives and unlikely to maintain the balance at this critical time. The Synod petitioned for the appointment of a Chairman from outside, and Thomas Blinkhorn Butcher, who had served the Mission in the Leeward Isles years ago (1848–57), was sent from home as Sargeant's successor. Butcher was a worthy man, of kindly spirit and wise judgement in most respects, who maintained a high ideal of discipline, an excellent Preacher withal, and 'a pure and zealous man of God'; till his retirement in 1888 he filled the chair of the Jamaica District (after 1884 the Kingston District) with much acceptance. His conciliatory temper smoothed the transition to the new order. He was the first Vice-President chosen for the Western West Indian Conference ; from 1886 to 1888 he acted as Governor of the York Castle School.<sup>1</sup>

The first Secretary of the Western Conference was Thomas M. Geddes, who filled this important office for many years ; he was President from 1896 to 1899. Amongst the earliest acts of the new Conference was the opening of a Book-room at Kingston. Geddes was appointed Book Steward, and so continued for a lengthened period. He proved himself a first-rate man of business, and was thoroughly versed in Connexional affairs. He had an iron constitution, and was a ceaseless worker. Devoted to the Jamaica people, Geddes associated himself with almost every public effort for their advancement during his course in the ministry of forty-five years. He died, spent with excessive toil, in 1900. Such Native leaders as Murray and Geddes gave dignity and distinction to the young Conference.

A Girls' High School (for boarders) was opened about this date at the Barbican, four miles from Kingston, of which Thomas Geddes—the man of all work !—was the first Governor. The Barbican Girls' School, designed to match the York Castle School for Boys, rendered good service to the Church for many years, but it never reached a secure financial basis. Geddes' report to the Committee at the end of 1881 indicates the straitness of the times :

You will have seen how hard a year this has been [through drought and consequent failure of crops]. . . . Some of us are doing two men's

<sup>1</sup> Butcher's retirement from the Kingston Circuit was saddened by financial trouble and 'the Butcher debts' were the subject of a long and irritating controversy between the Missionary Committee and the Western Conference.



work, and more, in the hope of finding relief for our funds. . . . We have accepted a provisional reduction on the Contingent Grant [from England] of 33 per cent.

The distress felt in Jamaica, and elsewhere in the islands, caused extensive emigration to Panama and Mexico. The construction of the Panama Canal projected by M. Lesseps had commenced, and thousands of West Indian labourers were being drawn to the Isthmus. Amongst these were many Methodists, for the care of whom the Jamaica Synod felt its responsibility. A work of the Spirit of God had begun in this quarter. A succession of earthquakes shaking the city of Panama roused a number of the immigrants to concern for their souls. 'They were not strangers to the ordinances of religion'; some of them had hidden their light amid abounding wickedness. Under the alarm these secret disciples drew together, and began to hold meetings for prayer and testimony. The gathering comprised men of nearly all the Protestant Churches; but its organization took a Methodist form, and before long it was decided to invite the pastoral care of the Methodist Church of Jamaica—an application heartily welcomed. Thomas Geddes was sent to the spot to examine and report. The following Synod appointed a lay agent to Panama, whose work led, after some interruption, to the dispatch in 1889 of Alexander W. Geddes as Missionary. Panama from this time became a well-sustained outlying station of the Jamaica District. The work of Methodism in this old Romanist stronghold and cosmopolitan meeting-place has been peculiarly difficult, but most interesting and important for the future. At the present date (1917) in the 'Panama and Colon' Circuit (named after the two termini of the Canal) we have a couple of Ministers and 766 Church members.

Up to the formation of the new Conference the conditions of Jamaica continued to be those of spiritual progress associated with increasing poverty amongst the people.<sup>2</sup> Under improved administration, however, York Castle was diminishing its debts, and found itself in a hopeful state. Five theological students were now at work there. In the Kingston and one or two other Circuits the Stewards, it was reported,

have come nobly forward and declared their readiness to take the

<sup>2</sup> In January, 1880, the report was: 'Finances down all round at Synod.' The two next years witnessed improvement, due to the breaking of the long drought.

full responsibility of their office. . . . We had about a dozen Stewards present in the Synod during the transaction of the financial business ; they manifested a deep interest, and took an intelligent part in our work.

A sharp division of judgement, however, showed itself in the 1883 Synod over the disposal of the credit balance in the yearly accounts of the better-to-do Circuits. Heretofore, as a matter of course, such surpluses had gone to meet the deficiencies of the poorer Circuits. The Circuit Stewards of the former group raised a protest against this custom, and claimed the right to retain, as in England, the whole of their Circuit income ; it was the property of the Quarterly Meeting, and should be expended solely upon Circuit objects. The existing Synod practice, it was argued, stultified the office of Stewardship, and frustrated the aim of the Missionary Committee to develop the functions of Circuit life. The Stewards of the Kingston Coke Circuit, whose plea Thomas Geddes had supported in Synod, addressed a memorial to the British President and the London Committee upon the point, and refused to hand over the balance in their hands to the District Exchequer until the matter should be settled on higher authority. This appeal was an embarrassing result for the Missionary Committee of its endeavours to enlarge the powers and awaken the self-respect of the West Indian lay officers. It was regarded, however, as a good omen for the establishment of the new policy, in whose favour a larger proportion of the leading laity of the islands were now enlisted. In 1883 Butcher thinks that

When the [British] Conference sees fit, the District will be prepared to enter into the scheme of a [separate] Conference ; but long habits of reliance on the Committee as a providence, and the liability [of the country] to periodical physical disasters of a desolating kind, will complicate matters.

In other Districts of the field there had been less advance during the seventies, and the outlook for Conference independence was dubious. The Antigua, St. Kitts, and Nevis Circuits, the older Georgetown Circuit in Demerara, with less certainty the St. Vincent Circuits, St. Eustatius and St. Martin (aided by Government subsidies), and Barbados (James Street), perhaps also Montserrat and Tobago, might be counted on for self-support ; the rest of the Circuits, through poverty or scant

membership, afforded no such prospect. The practice had grown up, with the permission of the home Committee,<sup>1</sup> of earmarking for relief of the poorer Circuits the Foreign Missionary proceeds of the several West Indian Districts—an appropriation which turned the Foreign practically into a Home Missionary Fund. This resort necessity could not fairly excuse, for the often touching liberality with which the Negroes contributed at missionary meetings was evoked by appeals made in behalf of distant heathendom. The Kingston Stewards referred to just above argued that the needier Jamaica Circuits were being pauperized by the present mode of subsidizing them<sup>2</sup>; that ministerial stipends should be adjusted to Circuit resources, and that their equalization was a mistaken policy. The Chairman Butcher approves this opinion, but would have a minimum stipend fixed and a separate District fund provided to assist Circuits demonstrably unable to reach this level. The *pooling* of Circuit incomes he regards as a practice that must be discontinued.

In the ST. VINCENT DISTRICT also West Indian laymen began to assert themselves. At Bridgetown, Barbados, from the earliest times Methodism had a comparatively strong nucleus of English laymen; these gentlemen were stirred by the movement of the Circuit Stewards of Kingston, Jamaica. The participation of the Stewards of self-supporting Circuits in Synod business, which had become, under direction of the home Committee, the rule in the West Indies,<sup>3</sup> had quickened their interest in Church affairs and led them to take their official duties very seriously. Hence in 1880 George Sykes, the excellent Chairman of the St. Vincent District, found himself faced with a number of questions raised by the Stewards of James Street Circuit, the mother Church of Barbados, which it was not easy to answer. They had been looking into the Methodist Constitution, and were not satisfied with the autocratic way of handling Church business and finance, at first imposed by necessity upon the Missionaries, which had acquired the force of custom. Like members of the Committee in

<sup>1</sup> This was virtually given up by making the Committee's annual grant to the District correspond to the sum of F.M. contributions accruing from it.

<sup>2</sup> One suspects Geddes' hand in the drawing up of the able memorial on this subject, presented by the protesting Circuit Stewards.

<sup>3</sup> Such Stewards were officially invited to the Synod in every case; but only a fraction of them were able to attend—chiefly those resident near the place of meeting.

London, they thought the time had come for assimilating colonial to home Methodism in Circuit management. Their twelve questions included the rights of Chapel Trustees, as well as those of Circuit Stewards. Good George Sykes gave a conciliatory answer to the remonstrating gentlemen and forwarded their queries to Bishopsgate, seeking advice upon the course he should pursue ; he was not a little disquieted at the trend of the manifestation.<sup>1</sup> Not satisfied with communicating through the District Chairman, the leader of the Stewards concerned wrote personally to the Secretaries asking for instruction as to the application of Methodist law to the fields abroad. It was a new thing for our laymen in the islands to raise inquiries of this kind. Such symptoms encouraged the Missionary Committee to push on the plans for the West Indian Conferences.

If wise and fatherly administration could have ensured prosperity, the St. Vincent District would surely have prospered in the pre-Conference period, when Henry Hurd guided its affairs from 1865 to 1879, and George Sykes<sup>2</sup> from 1879 forwards. About the beginning of the period (1866) there were cheering revivals in several important Circuits, and a hopeful spirit prevailed. The Churches grew in intelligence and discipline ; the burden of debt was lightened ; the Church plant was increased and kept in better repair. Schools were multiplied, and better staffed than in earlier years. These improvements were effected in face of misfortunes which would have disheartened any but men of strong faith and of invincible patience.

In Barbados the course of the seventies was marked by repeated

<sup>1</sup> The James Street Stewards had been studying Peirce's *Polity of Methodism* and found its directions clear enough ; but they were 'met by the assertion that these laws do not apply to the Mission Field, and that whatever may be the position and powers of the Quarterly Meeting in England, here it must be content to carry out the District Meeting's arrangements.' This attitude of the Synod authorities was untenable in face of the recent resolutions of the Missionary Committee urging the assimilation of the colonial Circuit system to that of the mother country.

<sup>2</sup> After one year of Hurd's administration Demerara was separated from the islands, with a Synod of its own. The Districts were reunited for a while after Greathead's collapse in 1881. It was in this case a choice between two evils ; on the one side the difficulty of providing efficient administrators for multiplied small Districts ; on the other side, the great distances in this Mission area, involving excessive cost and lengthened absence from home duties in travelling to and from the Synod. So serious were the latter objections that Albert A. Aguilar, one of the ablest and worthiest of the Native Ministers of this District, wrote to the Mission House about this time urging the advisability of making each island a District by itself ! He showed that in many particulars the island Superintendent (or leading Superintendent where the island contained several Circuits) was compelled in practice to exercise Chairman powers. On the establishment of the two Conferences the old Districts were sub-divided.



drougths, which ruined small cultivators and drove them to emigration. This calamity left a lasting mark on the island, permanently depressing the condition of its working people. Hurd remarks on the absorption of the peasant properties—a notable feature hitherto of Barbados agriculture and society—by the large estates, and on the reduction of the liberal garden allotments<sup>1</sup> it had been customary to grant to landless labourers. These retrograde movements in Barbados were economies which resulted from the succession of bad seasons. For a time Circuit funds in the island were all but bankrupt.

As this trouble grew lighter a time of sickness and disablement in the Mission staff followed, threatening to disorganize Methodist work throughout the District. Three young Missionaries arrived to reinforce the staff in 1866—Charles Buzza, Thomas J. Choate, and Thomas Lawson. Choate had a particularly fine and strong mind, with a poetic vein much appreciated by negro hearers; Buzza was a hearty, thoroughgoing Cornish Preacher, of faith and power; Lawson was equally efficient and reliable.\* They laboured chiefly on the St. Vincent and Barbados islands. Within ten years all three were gone—Choate invalided home, to his bitter disappointment, in 1872, the other two returning to England three years later.\* The three all lived to spend a long and useful ministry at home. Thomas Choate rose to eminence, occupying for a number of years the chair of the Liverpool District; he had a wide circle of deeply attached friends. Before the retreat of these young men, Horsford's sudden resignation and Gleave's illness (in 1869) had crippled the work in Barbados. Two years later a shocking moral breakdown, in the case of a Barbados Superintendent Minister,<sup>4</sup> created another vacancy on the Mission staff, attended with 'a greatly diminished income and a fearful loss of members' caused by the scandal. This train of damaging occurrences forbade the Church progress of which Barbados afforded a good prospect at the commencement of the period,<sup>5</sup> and made the work of its Circuits 'a great fight of afflictions.'

<sup>1</sup> Commonly half an acre of good soil.

<sup>2</sup> The last-named Minister is still living (1918), in honoured retirement, at Poole.

<sup>3</sup> In Buzza's case the breakdown was in his wife's health.

<sup>4</sup> This was a case of brain derangement as well as moral delinquency.

<sup>5</sup> A brief visit of Bishop William Taylor to Barbados in 1868 was attended with 'a blessed influence and glorious results' in the way of conversions, raising higher the hopes stirred by the spiritual awakening the Missionaries had witnessed in 1866.

An interesting question arose in this island in 1870, when the Moravians appealed for pecuniary aid from the Legislature and the Methodists were invited to do the same.<sup>1</sup> Hurd, the Chairman, was doubtful about the wisdom of accepting such assistance; the Mission House in London advised acceptance. A grant of £400 to the five Barbados Circuits was ultimately secured—a timely assistance in the straitened state of the Mission. Hurd insisted on the employment of this money in paying off *Chapel debts*; he deprecated the using of it to supplement Circuit income, rightly regarding this as a dangerous crutch. In St. Vincent, in 1867, the vexed question of the payment and status of locally enlisted Ministers was raised again; it was debated between Hurd, who stood for the equality of Missionaries and Native Ministers—the long-established West Indian usage—and Secretary Hoole, who pressed for the introduction of the grading practised on other fields. A modified system of gradation was adopted; but the reduced stipends imposed by the home Committee were found insufficient and caused discontent; further readjustment proved necessary.

In 1869 Richardson writes to the Mission House from the Kingstown Circuit (St. Vincent):

With the great business talents of our worthy Chairman, the harmonious co-operation of all our brethren in the District, the willing liberality of our people, there is reason to expect our District will go on and prosper both in material and spiritual things. . . . I have been in this District for thirteen years, and state that our prospects in all respects were never so good as at present.

Simultaneously Hurd reports that throughout St. Vincent 'a blessed work is going on.' Choate, from another part of the same island, says: 'Apathy and indifference in the Church have given place to earnestness and awakened zeal'; on the other hand, 'We still have to contend against the jealousy and bitter opposition of the Anglican clergy.' The District chapel debts are 'slowly diminishing; could they be paid off, the men all feel they could breathe freely and go ahead.' Referring to the same incubus, Hurd declares he 'can think of little else.' This was the chronic, and often crippling, sometimes crushing, trouble of West Indian Methodism—the cause of half its

<sup>1</sup> The sentiment in favour of equality amongst the Churches had grown in the colonies. In Jamaica and some other islands it took effect in the disendowment of the Church of England. Here and in British Guiana concurrent endowment was the course preferred.

reproaches and controversies with the Mission House at home. Relief was promised from the Missionary Jubilee Fund of 1863, by the aid of which, imparting a fresh stimulus to local effort, it was hoped that the entire property debts of the District might be cleared away. The receiving of Government grants was a vexed question in St. Vincent, as in Barbados, at this time. The alternatives of Disestablishment or Concurrent Aid for the Churches was warmly debated. Hurd, with some misgiving, inclines to accept legislative assistance for the relief of debt and for the subsidizing of country work, which (he says) can never be self-supporting—especially as grants from English Methodism are bestowed with a more and more grudging hand.

On the whole, in St. Vincent even more decidedly than in Barbados, the later sixties were years of revival and hopefulness. Could the debts be disposed of, Hurd is sanguine enough to think that in this island local resources would suffice to maintain the Mission, and the Committee's yearly grant might be dispensed with. But the next decade brought discouragement and retrogression, resulting from the same calamities which afflicted Barbados. Moreover, the coolies imported from India were now becoming numerous; their influx made a clamant demand on the Mission, calling for the strengthening of its staff and fresh expenditure on the part of the Missionary Society. Sykes, the new Chairman, reports from the 1880 Synod a decrease of Church membership, largely due to the discipline exercised on non-attenders at Class-meeting, but a marked increase in the number of efficient lay officers available in the different Circuits. The Ministers, he says, are 'training our people in the management of their financial affairs'—a hopeful sign for future self-maintenance in the Circuits.

The story of Methodism in the other islands of this District—Trinidad, Tobago, and Grenada—during the years 1866–84, ran parallel in most respects to that of St. Vincent and Barbados. The evangelization of Trinidad presented a bigger and more complicated problem than the Missionary Society appeared to have realized. The bulk of our adherents in Trinidad all along have been immigrants from other islands, and amongst these we have scarcely held our own.<sup>1</sup> Scattered over so large an area, Methodist incomers were often unreached

<sup>1</sup> Ten coolies were, however, reported as baptized in 1867. The question of Asiatic labour assumed larger proportions in Trinidad than anywhere else in the West Indies except British Guiana. Methodism has never really grappled with it.

by the slender and overworked itinerant staff and lost to their Church. W. P. Garry wrote in 1876: 'Want of men and means has rendered Methodism unaggressive in this island.' Inviting doors opened from time to time in different quarters of Trinidad, which the Church was powerless to enter. 'We have lost golden opportunities here,' writes the excellent and experienced John Badcock from Port of Spain in 1879. The complaints of the Missionaries of forty years ago are not yet out of date. The moral effects of Romish ascendancy in the island were such as to constitute a reason for the most energetic evangelism. By this date the Port of Spain Circuit had become self-supporting.

In Tobago throughout the period the Mission was fairly prosperous; numbering 892 in 1866, the Church membership in 1884 amounted to 1,038. During the earlier years Slater Sunderland exercised a specially successful and happy ministry here; on his return home in 1873, after twelve years in the islands, Hurd testified: 'He has done extraordinarily well in Tobago, better than any predecessor.' Three years earlier Sunderland had reported to the Missionary Committee:

We are now in a position to take a third Minister and support him without any additional grant. . . . More than a third of the population who attend religious worship are members of our Society or attendants on our ministry; the whole population is friendly to Methodism. We have nine stations [the farthest twenty-six miles distant from Scarborough, the island capital and Circuit-centre]. . . . Every place wants, and deserves, more preaching and more pastoral oversight.

Hurd endorses Sunderland's plea. 'There is no place,' he writes, 'where an extra man is more needed or where his work will be better repaid.' In course of time the 'extra man' was forthcoming.

The Tobago congregations contained an unusual proportion of well-to-do people, who liberally assisted the work. The goodwill of the planters was shown by a grant of £300 made by the Legislature in 1866 toward the liquidation of trust-debts. While Tobago lies outside the earthquake and hurricane zone, and passed with comparative ease through the commercial stringency of the seventies, it shared in the common trouble of the West Indian Churches—the rapid decay of buildings, entailing heavy costs in upkeep and repairs, and the consequent liability to the accumulation of debt.



Along with that of Trinidad, Tobago Methodism suffered through its remoteness from other parts of the District. The Ministers had difficulty in attending the Synods held at St. Vincent or Barbados; and though the Circuit possessed qualified laymen, distance forbade their participation in District business. It was hardly possible to interest them in Church matters outside the Circuit. Hence Trinidad and Tobago both lay very much outside the Connexional sphere and the Conference movement.

Grenada, the oldest station in the District next to St. Vincent and Barbados, underwent many fluctuations; as in the case of Trinidad, the Mission staff was never strong enough to challenge Romanist ascendancy. The Church membership grew, nevertheless, from 565 to 903 in the eighteen pre-Conference years; much of the increase was due to a revival which took place at the end of the period. Our adherents in this island belonged mostly to the very poor; but the Legislature of 1866 declined to grant the subsidy voted to our Church at the same date in Tobago. Many Methodists opposed the notion, lest it should form a precedent for State aid to Romanism. That hard worker and judicious pastor, William Cleaver,<sup>1</sup> toiled alone in Grenada at this time, and begged hard for an assistant, urging that this was a thoroughly *missionary* station, and that a single Minister hardly sufficed to shepherd the existing flock. In default of funds the claim could not be met, and Methodism was condemned to inefficiency. In 1874 the Church of England was disestablished in Grenada; no grants were henceforth made to any religious body except for school maintenance. Cleaver and his successors, working with persevering energy, gained ground, overtaken as they always were.

The story of the Mission in BRITISH GUIANA during 1866-84 is not a happy one. No other West Indian colony afforded so wide and varied a Mission Field; nowhere in earlier years had the Methodist outlook been more cheering. But a train of untoward events arrested progress. Demerara Methodism commenced this period with a Church membership of 3,098 and closed it with 3,654, while the province had multiplied its

<sup>1</sup> Cleaver was one of the earlier, and one of the best, of the Native white Ministers who have served Methodism in the West Indies. He was brought into the work by William Moister in 1843, and laboured most diligently and fruitfully in the District until his death in 1878.

population and resources. In 1862 British Guiana had been detached from St. Vincent to make a new District ; its remoteness of situation, and its unique possibilities of development, justified the step. The recent failure of the Training College project at Georgetown clouded the prospects of the newly formed District, but this misfortune did not affect the vital activities of the Church ; had there been soundness and strength in its chief organs, the failure would soon have been forgotten. A strange fatality befell its presiding officers ; not one of the four who followed in succession from the founding of the District was happy in his appointment. The overflowing energy and versatile powers of Henry Bleby were marred by a warmth of temper which led him into inconsiderate action, resulting in unseemly contention with several of his senior brethren, and he removed to another field. James Banfield, who took over the reins from Bleby's hands in 1866, was then nearing the end of his useful course, and his strength and authority proved unequal to the tasks of administration. James T. Hartwell, transferred from Antigua, was put in Banfield's place, which he occupied from 1872 to 1874. With all his heartiness and activity Hartwell did not succeed much better.

In John Greathead, Hartwell's successor, the District had a leader of abundant vigour and initiative, and of unique popularity ; but his elevation proved calamitous, for himself and for the Mission. He had coveted the chief seat in the Synod, where he was unquestionably the conspicuous figure, and had complained of the inertness or blundering of his predecessors ; when the trial came, he showed himself devoid of business capacity and wholly incompetent to handle Church finance. Had Greathead been sensible of his deficiencies and willing to be advised in practical affairs by wiser heads, while he turned his great gifts of eloquence and persuasiveness to account in public leadership, all might have gone well. As it was, he launched showy and expensive building schemes, particularly in his own Circuit, and flung money away right and left, rendering no proper account of his spendings, and sometimes forgetting them ! Funds failing the spendthrift, he borrowed money secretly in the colony to meet his deficits, and to cover old debts contracted new ones at heavier interest. Those who watched Greathead most closely at this time doubted whether to put down his irregularities to unscrupulousness or

to sheer helplessness and childish simplicity in money matters.<sup>1</sup> In the end his Chairmanship of nine years cost the Mission £12,000 of sheer loss.

Before the climax was reached suspicion was abroad. Greathead's underhand transactions were known to business men in the colony, and rumours reached the Mission House. George Sargeant was sent from Jamaica to inquire ; but the culprit's plausibility carried the day, and the reporter bade Bishopsgate dismiss its misgivings. When later, in the winter of 1878-79, Secretary Marmaduke Osborn visited the province from England with instructions to investigate the Demerara finances, he too was deceived by Greathead's air of innocence, by the cordiality of his reception, and the atmosphere of confidence and loyalty with which he was surrounded. He came home convinced that the Chairman had been much maligned.

Through the weakness of the Synod in the earlier time of Greathead's administration the constitutional check on his misconduct was wanting, while the extraordinary influence he had gained in the District went to silence criticism. The majority of the little court were Native Ministers, who saw everything through their Chairman's eyes ; no senior English Minister beside himself remained in the District. At length, in 1878, there arrived from England a young Missionary—John Grimshaw—who soon perceived whither things were drifting. After expostulating in vain with his chief, he intimated to the Mission House his discovery, as in duty bound ; but his statements were discounted, and he was reprovved for officiousness and evil-surmising. In 1880 a second young Missionary came into the District, after some years' service in the Bahamas—Henry Adams, a man of marked ability and independence—who joined the former protester in challenging the Chairman's finance ; then a third, who had been in the District somewhat longer, but did not wake up to the situation so soon, ranged himself with these two. This was Griffith Hampden Jones, and the three constituted a strong party of opposition. Though outvoted in Synod, their protests could no longer be ignored ; Greathead's wholesale borrowings had become an open secret in the colony. The

<sup>1</sup> When, after protracted investigation, it was supposed a complete account had been arrived at of the District debts, another £800 turned up of which the Chairman had no record—it had just slipped his memory !

repeated, plain-spoken letters of the remonstrants to the Committee, supported by incontestable facts and figures, at last prevailed over Greathead's vehement denials and denunciations of his troublers. A new investigation was ordered, and put into the hands of George Sykes, which led to the exposure of the Chairman's financing.

Greathead could not be made legally accountable for the loans and advances negotiated on the credit of the Mission ; and had he wished to recoup the Society, he was without the means to do so. The Synod had virtually given him *carte blanche* ; the Missionary authorities had failed to check their agent's malfeasance. It was impossible for the Bishopsgate exchequer to escape responsibility. To have repudiated the Greathead debts would have meant the ruin of Methodism in British Guiana and the discrediting of its good name throughout the West Indies. The whole burden had to be shouldered. Part of it was removed by the Missionary Society at the installation of the new Conference ; the rest remained to be an incubus on Demerara Methodism for many years to come.

Greathead was deposed in 1881 from the chairmanship and from the superintendency of the Trinity (Georgetown) Circuit. The British Guiana District was reunited with that of St. Vincent, the arrangement being that the Synod should meet in two sections, George Sykes, residing in Barbados, presiding over both. David Wright, one of the most dependable of the West Indian staff, who had laboured in the St. Vincent District since 1864, was put in charge of the reunited Georgetown Circuit ; Greathead for the present remained a Minister here. Wright also was made controller of the District finance. Sykes writes of the 1882 (sectional) Synod in Demerara as an 'anxious and perplexing' experience. The balance sheet drawn up at the preceding Synod had been entirely misleading. Interest due on the Government loans contracted by Greathead had accumulated to an amount threatening public scandal. Circuit accounts were in confusion<sup>1</sup> ; some of the Ministers were in desperate straits for money, their allowances having been unpaid or docked during the year ; several 'with tears'

<sup>1</sup> Greathead absented himself from this Synod. No report nor balance sheet was forthcoming for his Circuit (Georgetown, Trinity), the premier Circuit of the District. Wright says : ' Nearly half the time of the meeting was occupied in unravelling ' his financial affairs ; in the end ' Mr. Adams had to do the whole thing. . . . The greatest uncertainty was felt about many items. I am sure that Mr. G. does not understand one-third of what we have done ! '



implored the Chairman to save them from destitution by drawing on the home Committee. Wright declared that otherwise these District accounts of 1881 could not be closed, and he must refuse to take over the books. 'To save the credit of Methodism in the colony,' the Chairman drew a bill on the Bishopsgate Treasurers for £770. The irregularity was perforce condoned; never had a Missionary Synod been reduced to such a deplorable plight. Ordinary Circuit contributions throughout the District had heavily declined under the late relaxed administration; they showed a prospective deficit of over £1,200. The greater part of the Government grant-in-aid (amounting in total to nearly £1,500) was earmarked for interest on loans and the repayment of borrowed principal. The Ministers had striven to supplement Circuit funds by various special efforts in money-raising, undesirable in themselves and damaging to the regular income.<sup>1</sup>

Two causes perennially aggravated the money difficulties of the British Guiana Missionaries: (1) the excessive cost of living, in respect both of food and clothing,<sup>2</sup> which made the stipend inadequate even when regularly paid, and meant *starvation* for men without private funds whose stipend was curtailed; (2) the rapid decay of all buildings (constructed invariably of wood) in the peculiarly moist heat of the Demerara climate. Under the condition just named, and the neglect and wastefulness of the Greathead régime, the plant of the District had been reduced to the last degree of disrepair and required an enormous outlay to put it in good working order. With due economy the natural wealth of the country and the prosperity of its planters and traders supplied means for meeting this heavy expense, so long as the Church lived in popular esteem; but the sad feature of the case was that, as Sykes writes, Methodism 'had lost the respect and confidence of the respectable people.' Wright puts it more strongly still: 'Our position as a Church has been compromised; Methodism is the subject of ridicule and contempt in the colony.'

The Synod requested that Greathead and his two accomplices, both Native Ministers, should be removed from the District;

<sup>1</sup> One of them in writing home says: 'What we call "special efforts" here are a great curse.' They distracted the Missionary's energies, and too often had a dissipating effect on the minds of the people.

<sup>2</sup> According to the figures currently quoted, Demerara prices for the common necessities were the highest in the western Colonies. The Missionaries' letters of the period continually refer to this distressing embarrassment.

the former, after considerable hesitation, was recalled to England. Greathead had lately married for his second wife a colonial lady, whose circumstances, he declared, compelled him to remain in Demerara. Overtures being made to him just then from the Anglican Church, he accepted a curacy in Georgetown, where he completed his disgrace by seeking to draw over his former Methodist flock. In June, 1882, Wright reports that 'financial improvement has begun ; with patience, care, and perseverance,' he adds, 'I hope it will be permanent.'

The Greathead scandal, and the years of strife preceding it, account for the failure of the Mission to advance in this great and expanding colony. 'The culmination,' as Adams says, of 'sixteen years of laxity of discipline and wrong-doing' had arrived.

One must live here for a few months [writes Sykes in 1883]<sup>1</sup> to know how sadly our work has suffered, and the loss of position and influence that Methodism has sustained, and how other Churches have been fed by those who, dissatisfied with our administration, have gone from us.

It would be wrong to suppose that the misdoing or inefficiency of those in high places nullified all the faithful toil of the missionary staff throughout this length of time. In the earlier part of it, before his deterioration of character, Greathead's energy and evangelical zeal brought large accessions to the Georgetown Societies, and cheering reports came from the Trinity, Kingston, and Golden Grove centres.<sup>2</sup> Under George F. Swinnerton's vigorous ministry<sup>3</sup> a fruitful revival took place at Mahaica in 1867 ; but this Missionary found the material for building a manly Christian character deficient in his converts. 'I am fully convinced,' he writes, 'that (Church) expenses will not be met until' our people here 'become more conscientious and self-reliant' ; he speaks of discovering 'systematic frauds carried on in three of our chapels.' The latter circumstance was exceptional ; the former traits were far too general—the moral defects bred by slavery are eliminated from a community only through generations of patient Christian culture.

<sup>1</sup> He migrated at the beginning of this year from Barbados to Demerara.

<sup>2</sup> Georgetown was divided into three Methodist Circuits at this date.

<sup>3</sup> Swinnerton's health failed badly after four years in the tropics, and he went home in 1870. He spent a full and useful life's day in the home service, and died at an advanced age in 1918.

In 1868 Greathead established a Home Missionary Society for three objects : (1) to build an additional much-needed chapel in Georgetown ; (2) to promote the evangelization of the benighted outlying villages ; (3) to provide for carrying the Gospel to adjacent countries. He describes the enthusiasm with which his proposal was taken up by Georgetown laymen, and the ' unexpected talent ' displayed at the meetings in which it was inaugurated. We hear little of the further progress of this movement ; after its eager beginning something hindered. The projected chapel was raised, to replace an old building too small for its situation ; the latter structure was removed to a site farther out in the country, where a Society had been gathered by open-air preaching. Henry Hurd visited Georgetown to assist in opening the new church. He was greatly impressed by the progress and good spirit of Demerara Methodism manifest in many directions at that time (1869). On the other hand, he noted the dangerous disagreement existing between the Chairman (Banfield) and his brethren. Hurd endeavoured without avail to act the peacemaker. The bitter dissensions in the staff spread to the Societies, and in 1871 Hurd (from St. Vincent) and William West (from Jamaica) were sent by the Missionary Committee to inquire into the quarrel and bring it to an end ; but they were not armed with sufficient authority, and their intervention inflamed rather than subdued the animosity.

As in St. Vincent, so here, the coolie invasion lowered the wages of the negro labourers, which for some time after Emancipation were comparatively high, but now sank nearly to a bare subsistence-level. The impoverishment of the people dictated a severe frugality in missionary expenses, and made the wastefulness of District management in the later seventies the more disgraceful. Poverty made for immorality. From Essequibo, for example, it was reported that the Negroes regarded marriage as a luxury beyond their means (the most moderate fees were prohibitive) ; three-fourths of them lived in concubinage. The up-keep of Church fabrics was impracticable ; Hartwell in 1873 estimated the sum of £2,000 as necessary, in his Circuit alone, to put Methodist property into decent repair. Such a sum was out of the reach of our congregations. The people were accessible and willing, and the Circuit offered abundant work for a third Minister (it had two) ;

dire poverty forbade offering anything toward his support.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Bronkhurst's work amongst the East Indians continued all this time, with very limited success. He was an Indian-born Englishman of talent and education, who had earned a good degree in the work of the Ceylon Tamil Mission. He laboured diligently in this field; no solitary Missionary could well have accomplished much more than Bronkhurst did. It was a mistake to suppose that the Hindus would prove more open to conversion in America than at home. They reproduced on the foreign soil the whole system and atmosphere of Hinduism and presented a quietly solid resistance to the Missionary's attempts. Their evangelization must evidently be the work of long time and patience. Numbers of the children could be gathered into schools—the parents were alive to the advantages of English training—and the best hope of combating heathenism lay here. The Indian immigrants, amounting before long to scores of thousands, were dispersed through the plantations all over the country. Bronkhurst had to seek them out and plan his visitations in a wide itinerancy. The concentration of effort and combination of agencies, through which alone it is possible—as the Missionaries in India were discovering—effectually to impress Hindu society, was out of the question in Guiana, hence the Mission to the colonial coolies all along has yielded but meagre fruit.<sup>2</sup> In 1866 Bronkhurst reported 16 Church members; in 1884, 48; for the year 1916 the same Mission is credited with 117 Church members—a number hardly counting as the 'grain of mustard-seed' amidst the 79,000 of the East Indian population.

<sup>1</sup> This case was a sample of many in the District. Coming from Antigua, Hartwell was struck with 'the number of inviting openings in this colony as compared with the West Indian Islands, where, as a rule, we have no room for extension.' The latter statement, to be sure, was not true of Trinidad, nor of Grenada.

<sup>2</sup> Bronkhurst had to complain of half-hearted support on the part of more than one of the British Guiana District Chairmen of his time.



### XIII

#### THE PRE-CONFERENCE PERIOD

(ANTIGUA AND BAHAMA DISTRICTS AND HONDURAS)

Antigua—Dissensions—J. H. Darrell—St. Kitts—Calamities—Opposition to the Mission House—The Bahamas—Devastating Storms—Effect of American War—Henry Bleby—Honduras—A Country of Missed Opportunities—A forgotten Hero—Difficulties—Plans for Extension—Richard Fletcher's Chairmanship—Disapproval of Conference Scheme.

THE pre-Conference years passed somewhat uneventfully in the Methodism of the ANTIGUA (Leeward Islands) DISTRICT. As in other quarters, the late sixties were marked by revival in various directions. From Parham (Antigua) James H. Darrell writes in 1866-67: 'The results of the year fill our hearts with devout gratitude. . . . Throughout the Circuit in every Department we have met with encouragement.' From the same spot 700 conversions were reported in 1868; 'a great and wonderful change had passed upon a large section of the population.'

From Charleston (Nevis) Alfred Kent writes in 1869:

The Society schedule at the end of the June quarter showed a net increase of over 600 members, while the Society receipts advanced £160 upon the corresponding half-year of 1868.

He speaks of 'startling triumphs of God's grace.' St. Kitts witnessed a similar awakening in 1870.

Antigua Methodism was proverbial for its 'ups and downs.' The better education the Negroes of this island had received had not so far produced superior fruit in the way of stability of character and love of peace; in the course of the seventies a serious spiritual decline took place. The recent division of the Circuit appears to have made for jealousy and ill-feeling; a reunion was brought about in 1876, by which date the Circuit membership had fallen to about 1,600. Dissension between the Chairman and his brethren on the staff, though not so

crying as in Demerara, wrought sad mischief during the same period in this District. As in the other instance, the Missionary Committee interposed by a Commission of Inquiry, Henry Hurd and William West coming down to make peace between James T. Hartwell and his Synod. Hurd sums up the situation in his trenchant way :

The Chairman has lost the confidence of his brethren ; nor is there any single one amongst them who would command it. Administration unsatisfactory, finances desperate.

Thomas Meade Chambers, M.A., assumed the direction of the Antigua District in 1872 and retained it right on into the Conference period. He was a man of legal mind, skilful in management and a strict economist, and ruled with energy and decision. By some of his brethren he was counted an autocrat, and his policy often met resistance from the Synod ; confident of his own judgement, he did not readily brook opposition, and his controversial powers made him a formidable opponent. For twenty years Chambers held the superintendency of the St. Kitts Circuit, for fifteen years the chairmanship ; despite the antagonism which, especially in his later years, his rule aroused, he was regarded as an indispensable man.

Stationed in Barbados on his removal from the Leeward Islands in 1887, Chambers came into collision with George Sargeant, the Chairman of the District and President of the newly established West Indian Conference, and brought himself under censure. His appeal to the British Conference was rejected, and he was deeply aggrieved. In 1889 he retired from the active ministry, after a course of forty-three years, marked by eminent courage, perseverance, and zeal, by painstaking toil and manifold practical ability, but marred by the defects of a masterful temper. He died in St. Kitts Island in 1892.

Chambers took the opposite side to his old friend Sargeant in regard to West Indian independence and the Affiliated Conference. On this question his Synod was entirely with him. The Antigua District, in fact, refused to consider the new Constitution when laid before it ; but the protest was unavailing. Chambers predicted that the proposed scheme of government would prove cumbrous and expensive, and ineffective into the bargain ; he was but too true a prophet.

William West (of Jamaica), who joined Hurd in the attempt to compose the staff dissensions of Antigua, was sent thither in the first instance to survey the damage wrought by the great hurricane of 1871, which spent its full fury on Antigua. He estimated nearly £3,000 to be needed to repair the injury to chapel property in the two Circuits ; for long they were crippled by the blow. Four years of unbroken drought ensued, reducing the tillers to pitiful destitution. The reports of 1875 from Antigua were despondent in the extreme ; before the end of the decade the Circuit (now *one* instead of two) had recovered its tone, and the outlook was bright once more. The death of John C. Emerson, who, fresh from England, fell a victim to yellow fever in the prime of his vigorous young manhood and commanding powers, was a bitter loss to Antigua Methodism at this juncture.

James H. Darrell, the Superintendent of the Antigua Circuit, differed from the Chairman on a fundamental point of policy. Retrenchment was the order of the day ; the West Indian grants from home were being cut down by 5 per cent. all round. Under these circumstances Chambers insisted that, to make ends meet, where local income could not be increased the ministerial staff must be cut down ; three Missionaries, instead of four, must therefore suffice for Antigua. The reduction of the Circuit ministry he regarded as less injurious to the work of God than the reduction of the outlay on schools and chapels—the inevitable alternative. A felt scarcity of *preaching*, he believed, would be, more than any, the surest means to bring home to the people the straits of the Church and provoke them to increased contributions. Darrell argued that at all costs the ministry must be maintained in adequate force ; on its efficiency, and sufficiency, every other interest of the Church depended. Undermanning was, in his view, a suicidal policy. With over 1,600 members in his Circuit, to drop the fourth Minister meant pastoral neglect, ill-filled pulpits, and consequent decay.<sup>1</sup>

The Synod decided emphatically in Darrell's favour<sup>2</sup>—every one knew how hard and successfully he laboured, and how

<sup>1</sup> It must be borne in mind that, from climatic causes, out of four Ministers in a West Indian Circuit one was more likely than not to be disabled at any given time, so that the working staff to be counted upon was in reality *three*.

<sup>2</sup> The Ministers present agreed to tax their own allowances in order to find the £150 necessary for the young Preacher required for Antigua.

nobly he bore the burdens of sick and infirm colleagues ; it was understood that a man would be claimed from London to fill Emerson's place. When no supply arrived, and it transpired that Chambers, while reporting the Synod's request, had advised the Committee to refuse it, no little indignation was expressed ; the resentment aroused was such as to disturb the unity and good feeling of the District. One of Darrell's two colleagues remaining (after Emerson's death) was crippled in the course of the year. The Superintendent was overwhelmed with difficulties, and his plans for Circuit advance were frustrated. Antigua approached the epoch of Conference-founding in discouragement, and under a sense of hard treatment.

St. Kitts Methodism held a steadier course. This island never experienced the decline in Church membership which overtook its companion ; between the years 1866 and 1884 the Society advanced in number from 2,780 to 3,510. Schools were improved and multiplied ; the people showed themselves peaceable and tractable, and of a liberal spirit. It seemed desirable that a Circuit so large in membership should be divided, and Bishopsgate in 1883 sent down instructions to this effect. Hereupon the Circuit Stewards took up arms. They and the Quarterly Meeting had not been consulted ; such dictation contradicted the declared policy of the Missionary Committee to encourage self-direction and to give full responsibility to lay officials in the West Indian Circuits. Their protest was endorsed by several of the Ministers, who pointed to the case of Antigua in proof of the unwisdom of dividing small island Circuits. If the membership were numerous, the limited area was easily travelled. ' I am impressed,' writes John H. Bridgewater,<sup>1</sup> after two and a half years' work in St. Kitts, ' with the great elasticity and ease which characterize the Circuit operations in spite of its great size.' Moreover, the division proposed would group the poorer Societies together in separation from the more affluent. The people were strongly opposed to any bisection, and the project was dropped.

St. Kitts had its share in the calamities and commercial troubles of the time. The hurricane of 1871 caused only less

<sup>1</sup> Bridgewater was a pure Negro, and, says Adams, ' a good specimen of the black man—of fine physique and strong voice,' while somewhat excitable in temper ; John Warrington testifies to his remarkable mental acquirements. His letters to England show sound sense and a good English style. Most of the Native Ministers at this period were men of mixed blood.



devastation here than in Antigua. Fire had in 1867 all but destroyed Basseterre, sparing, however, the Wesleyan mission house and chapel; the town suffered even more from flood in January, 1880, when two hundred human lives were lost. The Wesleyan manse was swept away, and the District records disappeared. The generosity of the people, and Chambers' skilful management, enabled the Circuit, aided by special grants from home, to meet these blows with fortitude. The year 1884 found St. Kitts readier to take its part in the new order than the Circuits belonging to the Eastern Conference. What has been said of St. Kitts applies to its lesser neighbours, Nevis and St. Eustatius. In the former island our Church membership grew during the eighteen years (1866-84) from 1,450 to 1,925, out of the small population. The revival of religion reported at Nevis in 1869 left abiding fruit. The people were poor, but 'glad to contribute'; for years before the time of independence they had pressed for the granting of a third Minister, whom they undertook to support. In 1881 Nevis was the one Circuit of the Antigua District which drew nothing—not even for schools—from the Committee's annual grant. The diminutive St. Eustatius Circuit remained stationary in number, its membership something above 200; here no room for expansion existed. As the century advanced poverty and depopulation grew worse in this once prosperous islet; the assistance of the Dutch Government, however, secured for Methodism financial stability.

The other islands in the same region—St. Bartholomew (Barts), St. Martin, and Anguilla—in 1866 constituted three detached Missions, with a Church membership of 128, 355, and 260 respectively; by the year 1884 the two latter were united in one Circuit, with a couple of Missionaries assisted by a lay agent and 760 members, while the membership in St. Barts was reduced to 77. The last-named island had to be left repeatedly pastorless; their Ministers invariably commended the spirit of the St. Bartholomew Methodists—a people few in number and poor in worldly wealth, but rich in faith and love. St. Martin and Anguilla also declined in prosperity, as did the smaller islands generally, during these adverse years. On St. Martin many well-to-do middle-class families resided, both on the Dutch and French side of the island, a number of whom attended Methodist worship without

joining the Church. With rare exceptions the membership consisted of slaves and poor free Blacks or coloured folk. The Governments subsidized the schools ; that of the French St. Martin showed itself increasingly appreciative, and Methodist teaching steadily gained ground in face of Romanist opposition. In 1879 Richard Smith writes : ' The popular sentiment is evidently becoming more and more Protestant.' But the Government naturally pressed for the appointment of French-speaking Ministers—a desire with which the Mission could seldom comply. This Circuit failed to rear Local Preachers, so that its pulpits could only be supplied defectively, even when two Ministers were available, which was by no means always the case.

There remain to be noticed for the present period, in the Antigua District, Montserrat, Dominica, and Tortola. In Montserrat James H. Darrell spent four of the happiest years (1868–72) of his able and fruitful ministry, in which time the Church membership increased from about 400 to near 600. The Jubilee of the Montserrat Mission was held in 1870, when, with some help from the British Jubilee Fund of 1863, debts were cleared off and a happy impetus was given to the life of the Circuit. In the early eighties the hope was entertained of securing a second Minister, whose support was promised ; a second Preacher's house was provided by the Circuit. But the Chairman's policy of staff-reduction disconcerted this plan. Instead of an ' active man from England,' he offered Montserrat a local probationer whose strength was believed to be unequal to the work, and whose appointment was regarded as a breach of faith. The promised subscriptions were withheld and the arrangement lapsed, leaving behind it soreness and discouragement. Frederick C. Chesters, the Minister in charge, wrote in distress about the check thus received by his Circuit. The vexation of the Montserrat Methodists was aggravated in 1881 by the cancelling, on the ground of expense, of their invitation to the Synod to meet in their island, which in the first instance had been accepted. In 1882, when Charles Angwin had succeeded Chesters in the Superintendency, the Chairman relented on the question of the second Montserrat Minister, and John G. Warrington, one of the ablest young men in the District, was sent to fill this post, the grievance being thus removed.

Thomas H. Bailey, Superintendent of Montserrat in 1883, sent home in that year a full account of the religious condition of the island. He describes Roman Catholicism as prevailing to the south, Anglicanism in the town (Plymouth) and neighbourhood, and Methodism—‘of an excellent quality too’—on the windward side. In the rough and little cultivated northern section, whose inhabitants are mainly descendants of the old white settlers, ‘we have long had a Society, which has proved faithful though little visited.’ When, on the appointment of a second Minister, ‘this District was properly worked, good results followed; a new and larger chapel was urgently needed.’ Bailey begs for a donation of £50 to enable him to take immediate steps to secure the position. Elsewhere, in a certain village stronghold of Obeahism where Bailey had gained a footing, ‘the town clergyman, an inveterate enemy of Methodism, came on the scene at once and began services and a Sunday School in the house’ he had occupied. ‘For eight months this went on, till suddenly a revival broke out,’ and within a week a Society-class of twenty was formed.

At Dominica the Mission was confronted with two powerful enemies—the dominant Roman Catholicism and the deadliness of the climate to European life. The Church membership was stationary in numbers, varying between six and seven hundred. Joseph Frederick Southern,<sup>1</sup> writing in November, 1870, gives a graphic description of the island, and of his journeyings amid the glorious scenery, by sea and land; he indicates by the way the ruinous state of most of our premises, due to the lack of oversight, and concludes: ‘As to the people, I can speak favourably of them; they are exceedingly kind, and love their Ministers.’ Notwithstanding its small Methodist constituency, the comparative largeness of the island and the excessive distance and difficulty of the Missionary’s journeys necessitated division into a couple of Circuits, with Roseau and Lasoye for their heads, which in 1884 counted a membership of 224 and 427 respectively. The Romanists of Dominica outnumbered the Methodists by five to one.<sup>2</sup> In 1882, with two Missionaries, the Circuits together had 11 chapels and preaching-places,

<sup>1</sup> The course of this beloved young Missionary, who laboured for six years in the Antigua District, was ended through death by drowning in 1874. He is described as a ‘careful and winning Preacher, though not brilliant—frank, genial, faithful.’

<sup>2</sup> France for long resented the possession of Dominica, lying as it does between her two great colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and the antagonism of Romanists and Protestants was stimulated by political jealousy.

9 Local Preachers, 688 Church members, and 315 scholars. The figures of the present date closely correspond to these, except that the number of scholars and of Local Preachers have both nearly doubled, and three Ministers are employed here instead of two. Methodism supplied the only evangelical influence on the island and a much-needed refuge from the superstition and spiritual tyranny of Rome. Hence Moister writes<sup>1</sup>: 'There is a larger proportion of intelligent and educated gentlemen of colour in this island than we have known in any other West Indian colony.' From the beginning our Missionaries had in Dominica won the friendship of scattered Europeans, few in number but lovers of the Gospel. Altogether our Church in the island formed an outpost of Evangelical Christianity well worth maintaining. Chambers describes, with excusable warmth, the probable effect of the policy of continuous retrenchment adopted by the Mission House toward the West Indies, as it bore on Dominica :

Whatever be its consistency with your financial theory, your refusal of exceptional aid to Dominica must soon *starve out* our cause there and practically surrender the island to Popery !

This extreme disaster was averted ; but a more liberal support and a stronger agency were necessary, as in the case of Trinidad, to secure in Dominica the results the Society looked for.

The Methodists of the Tortola Circuit were the poorest, and perhaps the most deserving and lovable, in all the West Indies. Here, in the Virgin Islands, ours was the Church of the people, and the main responsibility for their spiritual care and training was ours. During the years 1866-84 the membership of this Circuit dwindled from 1,707 to 1,176 ; at the latter date it supported but one Missionary, where earlier there were two and even three ! This was not due to backsliding on the people's part, nor to the waning of Methodism, but to impoverishment and depopulation continuing steadily for many years, as the staple exports of the little islands one after another failed. The Society's policy of progressive retrenchment with a view to compelling self-support bore most hardly on the poorer Circuits, which, contributing already to the best of their power, possessed no untapped resources. Such was the case of Tortola, where the Negroes, scattered through a multitude of

<sup>1</sup> *The West Indies, Enslaved and Free*, p. 283.



islets, lived as peasant cultivators on the fruits of a thin soil tilled with imperfect implements. They shared, moreover, in every visitation of earthquake and storm ; after the cyclone of 1871 their Minister, Alfred Kent, writes : ' What to do for the poor people is almost torture of mind. . . . The devastation can scarcely be conceived.' For the time this awful calamity broke up the Society ; the Circuit membership was permanently decimated. Hardly anywhere were the directions of the home Committee for the introduction of Circuit lay organization better carried out than here ; for these were a willing and intelligent body of Methodists, despite their scanty means. James N. Podd,<sup>1</sup> the Tortola Minister in 1880, enumerates recent tokens of improvement—increase of membership, extension of schools, renovation of the second Minister's house in hope of his restoration. ' Could the Circuit be assisted to put all its buildings into sound repair,' Podd is sanguine enough to ' believe that it could be made self-supporting.' This hope was dashed by a ' serious drop in finance ' due to a bad season. ' It seems impossible,' he writes later, ' for the Circuit to support two men, yet one cannot do the work.' In 1883 he reports three schools closed ' for lack of a few pounds.' The over-tasked man continues :

Retrenchment at headquarters operating along with reduced local circumstances will stamp out Methodism, if continued long enough. The High Anglicans, with the S.P.G. behind them, are ready to step into our place. Here am I labouring alone, where some years ago you kept *three* Missionaries ! Can it be wondered at if the work deteriorates ?

In the BAHAMAS the period was ushered in by a hurricane the most destructive this History records in any part of the West Indies, which occurred on October 1, 1866. The beautiful Trinity chapel of Nassau, opened the year before and costing £8,000, was wrecked, and the smaller Ebenezer chapel injured. From Spanish Wells,<sup>2</sup> Eleuthera, Harbour Island, Andros, the Biminies, the like tale of trouble came. ' Nearly all that has been done in my time,' writes the sorrowful Cheesbrough, ' in

<sup>1</sup> A coloured Native of Nevis, who had served the Church for many years as teacher, leader, and Local Preacher before (in 1866) he was promoted to the ministry, in which he served laboriously and faithfully for over forty years. James Podd was a good Preacher, and a man of sober judgement and business habits.

<sup>2</sup> A town on a small island west of Eleuthera, whose people are by origin mainly North American Whites, refugees from the War of Independence. Here Methodism had taken firm root.

the way of building or enlarging chapels has been undone in a single day !' The Missionary Secretaries replied promptly and generously, remitting £1,000 at once toward repairs, and promising an addition of £500 to the annual Bahamas grant. The Anglican Bishop and the Rector of Nassau showed peculiar kindness to the unhoused Methodists ; twelve Anglican churches were shattered by the same blow in different parts of the group. Thousands of the islanders saw their sailing-craft and their livelihood destroyed at a stroke. On New Providence alone over 600 dwellings were swept away.

At this juncture the close of the American War brought to an end the blockade-running which had inflated, while it demoralized, the trade of Nassau,<sup>1</sup> and gave this town an extraordinary burst of prosperity. The old business of 'wrecking,' the most lucrative employment of the Bahamas, had greatly fallen off in consequence of the growth of steam navigation and the multiplication of lighthouses. Sponge-gathering in the shallow waters, and fruit-growing on land, replaced the former occupation ; but such changes are slowly made, and for some years the Bahamas remained in reduced circumstances. At the best the sponge-trade has never been very remunerative ; the cultivation of tropical fruit requires an experience and skill not acquired in a day, and is scarcely dependable enough for a staple industry.

Henry Bleby, who in 1868 succeeded Cheesbrough in the District chair, which he occupied for ten years, sends to the *Missionary Notices* for 1871 (pp. 8-13) an interesting account of these islands, embracing both their commercial and religious condition. He anticipates much benefit to the people from their change of employment. 'The certainties of the land will be far more profitable,' he thinks, 'than the chances of the sea' ; in the United States he sees an unlimited market for Bahamian produce. He rejoices in the approach of Disestablishment, which will relieve the Methodists from the taxation they have endured 'to support a Church much smaller than their own.'

<sup>1</sup> While some Nassau merchants made enormous gains by this traffic, and a feverish stimulus was given to the activities of the port, the general commerce of the islands suffered severely through the interruption of ordinary traffic with the continent.

<sup>2</sup> One-eighth of the Bahamian revenues (amounting to 3s. 5d. per head of the population) had gone to maintain the Anglican and Presbyterian Establishments, whose adherents jointly included barely a third of the people. The Presbyterians, much to their credit, united with the Methodists in promoting the change.

In Nassau, the capital, Methodism has 'three good chapels,' attended by considerable congregations. Attached to these are three Sunday Schools, containing 'a large number of children of all classes, rich and poor, White and Black.' At Harbour Island, 'the Montpelier of the Bahamas, we have,' writes Bleby, 'perhaps the largest congregation in the colony, most of the people in the town being connected with Methodism.' This Circuit Bleby made his head quarters. On the larger Eleuthera, divided into two Circuits, the Mission held a similar predominance. Abaco, the most northerly island of the group and one of the largest, lying off the coast of Florida, 'possesses peculiar claims to beauty' and a delightful winter climate. Our occupation here was more recent, and much room remained for development amongst the thinly scattered population. At Green Turtle Cay, however, where the chief town of Abaco stood, containing 1,500 people, we had a chapel which would nearly hold them all. Amongst the Florida Keys lining the opposite coast had sprung up the settlement of Key West, destined to grow into an important trading city and a naval base of the United States Government. To this centre, as Bleby notes, immigrants were thronging from the Bahamas. Before long Bahamian Methodism followed its sons thither, and 'Key West' is now one of the leading Circuits of this District. Turk's Islands,<sup>1</sup> situated far south of the rest of the District, were for the time re-attached to the latter, and along with them the Santo Domingo Stations. The solitary and neglected Inagua was visited at this time by Bleby, who found a handful of persevering Methodists there; after a renewed period of desertion this interesting island was reoccupied. In other islands dispersed through the group we had small Societies receiving occasional oversight, but without a resident Missionary.

Such was Henry Bleby's review of his District as it existed half-a-century ago; its character and scope at the present day appear to be much the same, though its institutions have greatly developed. Bleby was a famous chapel-builder; following on the fearful wreckage of 1866 his exertions in this direction and his resourcefulness in raising funds were invaluable.

<sup>1</sup> The tiny group of the Turk's Islands is so isolated that the Colonial Office has placed it under a separate administration. Historically and geologically, the Turk's and Caicos Islands are quite detached from the Bahamas. The principal employment of the people is salt-making.

Unceasingly he enforced on the Societies self-support, with an urgency sometimes militating against his popularity. 'There is much to be done,' he wrote, 'in *unpauperizing* the Circuits here, and in making the people feel they can do much more than at present.' The great desideratum for West Indian Negrodom, in his view, was that the people should learn to love work and to work with better skill.

Jonathan Richardson took over the reins from Henry Bleby, and gave a fresh impulse to the spiritual work of the District. Bleby had not found himself at home in Nassau; the Synod insisted that his successor should reside there. During the five years of Richardson's leadership, notwithstanding the transference of Turk's Islands and Santo Domingo with their 500 members and more to Haiti, the District registered an increase of nearly 400 upon its previous membership. About the time of his departure Richardson writes: 'I fully believe that on the whole Methodism is in a healthier and better condition in the Bahamas' than ever before—this despite commercial distress and the retrenchment sternly enforced by the Missionary Committee, and exceptional troubles in the way of storm and of sickness. A happy revival took place in Nassau, while the Abaco Circuit had grown strong enough to support the second Missionary so long required there.

For twenty years Richardson had been a resolute advocate of independence for West Indian Methodism. Now that the revolution was definitely proposed from England, he found his District—Ministers and laymen alike—to a man opposed to the change. For this reason, in 1883 he felt himself compelled to seek another sphere, and removed to Barbados, in his former District, where he assisted in establishing the new order. Francis Moon, the senior Bahamas Minister, took Richardson's vacated seat under the title of 'Acting Chairman,' and presided over the District in this capacity for six years—an unprecedented extension of the provisional appointment—until his retirement in 1889. By that date Moon had been thirty-five years in the Bahamian ministry. A gentle, patient, faithful pastor, beloved by the people, who were familiar with his presence in every part of the District, he lacked something of the energy and decision necessary for a Church leader. He spent his declining days in the islands, and died in 1902 when past his seventieth year, having devoted



a life's labour to this single field. He left a valued son in the work, Francis W. Moon, who served in his father's District from 1869 to 1897, subsequently labouring in the home field. Contemporary with Francis Moon was Elijah H. Sumner, a Bahamian Missionary from 1868 to 1891. A man of distinct force both in preaching and administration, who could on occasion blend sternness with his tenderness, Sumner was held in deep respect, and set his mark for good on all his Circuits both abroad and in England. He reached a ripe age, dying in 1916. Robert Whittleton, of the same period, played an active part in the Bahamian work for twenty years (1873-93)—'one of the most capable and faithful of the long-service Missionaries,' writes Henry Adams, 'that our Society has had the good fortune to employ.' Whittleton returned to the English work in 1893, and is now a Supernumerary. Adams' six years of distinguished service in these islands closed with a tragic fatality—the death from fever of his two boy-children, followed by that of his wife; thereupon he was transferred to British Guiana.

Like British Guiana, HONDURAS has been for the Missionary Society a country of missed opportunities. Our people at home never seem to have quite understood the difference between these continental Missions and the insular West Indian stations; not unfrequently Demerara and Honduras were spoken of as 'islands'! The fact was hardly realized that in these Districts the Church had entered fields of unlimited liability, in which initial success entailed wide extension, and openings multiplied with every step of progress. The Honduras Mission was commenced with inadequate strength. During the first nine years it did little more than gain a footing at Belize, where in 1834 the Church had about 50 members (7 of them slaves), with two out-stations situated southwards along the coast—at Mullin's River and Stann Creek—and a few preaching-places up-river amongst the negro lumbermen. This point our narrative had reached in Chapter VIII.<sup>1</sup> The relations of the negro slaves—not very numerous—to their masters in this colony were more favourable than elsewhere; and the Emancipation of 1834 formed no such dividing line

<sup>1</sup> The miscarriage of the more distant attempt made on the Mosquito Coast discouraged the Society from further adventures in this quarter.

in its history as in other colonies. The Spanish and the Native Indian elements were here of preponderant importance; but it was long before our Mission was in any way prepared to deal with these populations. Until 1840 or later the single Missionary at Belize found his chief task in ministering to the (mainly) white congregation in that place and building up the Church there,<sup>1</sup> which had grown to nearly 200 persons—a thriving and much attached Society, exerting a salutary influence on this important and rapidly growing town. Hitherto no Missionary except Edney had been able to remain in the country for any great length of time.

It was Edney who made the first considerable move, after the misadventure on the Mosquito Coast, outside of the Belize neighbourhood. Ruatan is an island of more than 1,000 inhabitants situated 120 miles south-east of Belize across the Gulf of Honduras. A colony of negro labourers from the Grand Caymans had migrated thither<sup>2</sup>; amongst these were a group of Methodists, who invited Edney to visit them. He went accordingly in November, 1845, stayed a week on the island preaching and visiting, and succeeded in forming a Society of 36 people and setting things in train for the building of a chapel. The Ruatan Society proved itself of good quality, and Methodism henceforth held a firm footing in Ruatan and the Bay Islands, which for the present were visited from Belize. In the year 1860—when the Honduras Church members numbered close on 1,000—Ruatan first appears as a separate station with its resident Missionary.

A danger arose in 1848 to which British Honduras has been frequently exposed—a revolt of the Native Indians against the Spaniards of Yucatan.<sup>3</sup> No invasion of the colony, however, took place. The occurrence directed the attention of the Missionaries to the condition of the Maya Indians across

<sup>1</sup> Not a single convert had as yet been won amongst the Caribs of Stann Creek.

<sup>2</sup> Ruatan and the adjacent Bay Islands passed under British protection in 1853 and were annexed to the colony; they were chiefly inhabited by free Blacks from the British island-colonies. The islands were, however, claimed by the Republic of Spanish Honduras, near the coast of which they lay, and in 1861 were handed over to its Government, much against the will of the negro occupants. Religious liberty was guaranteed in the Treaty of Cession; but the guarantee has been sometimes forgotten, and the Methodists, who are numerous in the islands, have suffered from Romanist encroachments and from the violence of the revolutions with which the Republic is from time to time disturbed.

<sup>3</sup> This peninsula forms an outlying province of the Mexican State, sparsely inhabited and at that time badly governed.

the border. The Belize Circuit was served by two Ministers, and had strengthened its hold on the town; by this time it counted 350 Church members. A Methodist Day School was established, which was well supported by the town's people, and flourished when it could secure a competent English master—this was not always the case. Joseph Webster was in charge of the Honduras Mission at this date (1847-51). A man of strong, resolute nature and a hearty Methodist Preacher, bringing to the work some knowledge of Spanish, had he been able to remain in Honduras Webster might have accomplished much; but he was removed to Jamaica at the end of his probation. There he laboured for six years; for one year after that in Santo Domingo, when failure of health drove him to England.<sup>1</sup>

Hitherto no Missionary with linguistic gifts had stayed long enough to acquire the Spanish and the Maya (Native Indian) tongues, the knowledge of both of which was necessary for complete efficiency. If our Mission sought the evangelization of the country, its future lay in the direction of these languages. With Richard Fletcher, appointed to Belize in 1855, came the man marked out by God for this larger task—one of the forgotten heroes of Methodist missionary history. He had spent his apprenticeship on the West African coast, from which he returned 'a complete wreck,' the sole survivor of four companions who sailed thither in 1850. A year later he was ready to face the tropical sun again. For five years he laboured in Belize, learning Spanish there and acquiring some knowledge of Maya.<sup>2</sup> He was bent on reaching the still heathen Indians, and the Mestizos—the great population of mixed Spanish and Amerindian blood,<sup>3</sup> whose religion was a debased Popery, lightly held by most. With this object in view he selected Corozal, the border town of British Honduras, ninety miles north of Belize, for his base of operations. So early as 1856 he writes:

There is a large population at Corozal . . . composed principally of fugitives from Yucatan, who seek protection from the troubles of their own country. The Gospel has not yet been carried to them; but,

<sup>1</sup> In 1858 Webster was appointed to Gibraltar, and his long and successful career in the Methodist Army and Navy Department began. He died, full of years and greatly beloved, in 1899.

<sup>2</sup> In 1864 Fletcher preached his first sermon in this strange tongue.

<sup>3</sup> American Indian, in distinction from the East Indian or Indians proper.

having received an urgent invitation from the magistrate, it is our intention to visit them as soon as possible. We begin with a membership of 5.

The Missionary's heart was moved by the distressful state of the continent on which he stood ; in 1858 he writes :

No part of the world needs the Gospel more than Central America ; for no part of the world exceeds it in cruelty, murder, and every diabolical practice.

In 1858 the third Missionary for Honduras arrived<sup>1</sup> in the person of George Sykes ; the Mission was for the first time tolerably staffed. It was now parted off from the Jamaica District under the heading ' Central America '—a title indicating Fletcher's success in infecting the Mission House, for the time at least, with his own ambition ; Fletcher, to be sure, was Chairman. He prepared to take up his residence at Corozal, his devoted colleague<sup>2</sup> of four years past being stationed at Belize, and Sykes, the new-comer, at Ruatan.<sup>3</sup> In the stations of 1860 the ' Honduras District ' appears as the foundation of the new missionary province of ' Central America,' with its head quarters in Corozal, where an Assistant is allotted to the Chairman, raising the number of Honduras Missionaries to four. A large house was given to the Mission there by a liberal friend, which served the Missionary for domicile, chapel, and school. The English residents in Corozal welcomed Fletcher's coming, and opened their houses to him. The Mission appeared to be set on a solid footing and prepared to enter on its great business—the evangelization of the half-Romanized Spanish-Indian people swarming around it.

At Corozal Richard Fletcher was destined to halt for twenty years ; here the chief work of his life was done. He held his ground ' in the face of the greatest opposition, with a strength and zeal still (in 1898) talked of as wonderful.' His patience, humility, gentleness, and self-denial were those of a saint indeed ; perhaps with a more resolute will and a more vigorous assertion of the claims of his work he might have succeeded

<sup>1</sup> By this time the District counted 982 Church members, 600 of these in the Belize Circuit (including now a Society of Caribs at Stann Creek), 363 in Ruatan Circuit, and 19 at Corozal.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Daniel Webb, though not sharing Fletcher's linguistic gifts, laboured for fourteen years in Honduras with marked ability, self-denial, and success. After losing his wife from yellow fever and himself suffering much sickness, he returned to fulfil a ministry of above thirty years in English Circuits.

<sup>3</sup> The last two appointments appear, however, to have been speedily reversed.



better in the realization of his designs. During this period he furnished the Maya Indians, through the British and Foreign Bible Society, with a translation of the three first Gospels, adding a Catechism and a Book of Prayers in the same vernacular. Secretary W. B. Boyce, who had made so great a contribution to South African linguistics, was much interested in Fletcher's language-work, and urged on him the preparation of a Maya grammar—a task he was never able to accomplish. He travelled widely, amid much hardship and danger from the savage Indians of the interior, ministering both to Negroes and Amerindians employed in wood-cutting and on the plantations scattered along the river-banks above Corozal, and reconnoitred in various directions across the border, with his eye constantly on the evangelization of the Spanish Republics. The assistance promised to Fletcher at Corozal upon the Missionary Stations was not forthcoming; he was left single-handed, and was compelled during most of his time there to be schoolmaster as well as evangelist and pastor! Comparatively little definite extension was effected, and when, with strength spent, Fletcher gave up the struggle and returned to England in 1880, the 'Corozal (Indian and Spanish) Mission' returned no more than 43 members—Fletcher's work appeared to have been little better than failure! What could the strongest man achieve unaided, coping with the multifarious work of a Mission in three languages amid a welter of races and religions? This position was chiefly of value as affording a stepping-stone and *point d'appui* for the invasion of the Spanish-Indian region across the Hondo. When, in the course of two or three years, it appeared that we were going to stand still at Corozal, Belize reassumed its primacy, and the former place, though retaining the Chairman, dropped to the bottom of the list of Circuits, while the daring ensign *Central America*<sup>1</sup> disappeared from the Stations! The Honduras District sank again into a colonial Mission, renouncing continental pretensions.

At Belize, soon after Fletcher's removal, a tragedy befell which overclouded the whole Mission. An epidemic of yellow fever broke out, in which were carried off at once Mrs. Webb (on a visit with her husband from Ruatan), Mr. Sanders, the

<sup>1</sup> Later the West West Indian Conference used the designation 'South and Central America' to cover its Panama and Costa Rica Stations.

successful and highly valued Methodist schoolmaster,<sup>1</sup> and Miss Sarah Beal, who had arrived a few months previously to take charge of girls' education—the first martyr of the Women's Auxiliary to the Missionary Society. Webb and Sykes were both attacked by the disease, and incapacitated for some time. Fletcher, coming in from Corozal, was the only member of the Mission unscathed; his youngest daughter fell a victim to the fever, while his wife and an elder daughter were also attacked by it.

The failure of the Society to push the Honduras Mission in Central America is easily accounted for when one remembers the conditions affecting its work during the sixties. In the first place, the American War of 1861-64 disturbed the central along with the northern regions of the continent, and brought financial trouble on all the British colonies in that quarter. Simultaneously, the new commitments of the Missionary Society in Italy, China, and India absorbed the attention of its supporters at home, and strained its resources to the utmost. The field offering itself to Methodism in Spanish America appeared far less important than its competitors, and it was a field comparatively withdrawn from view, and appealing much less strongly to British sympathies than they did. So 'Central America' must bide its time, and Richard Fletcher must remain at the open door for twenty years, in the heart-sickness of hope deferred. Confined to its three Circuits, the Mission made slow progress in this decade. The 985 Honduras Church members registered in 1860, by the year 1870 had only increased to 1,060. Belize had suffered another heavy blow in the destruction of its chapel and schools by the fire which swept the city in 1863. After this calamity came the dispute arising with the schoolmaster, which prejudiced our work in this centre not a little. Edward Webb quitted the field in 1866, when his health finally gave way; the triumvirate of Fletcher, Webb, and Sykes, who had worked together for many years in admirable harmony, was broken up. The Ruatan Circuit suffered grievously through the long-continued illness of Mr. and Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> This post was extremely difficult to fill. With Sanders' successor, an able man of unsuitable temper, the Mission was compelled to part after painful contention. The Belize School was of the utmost importance to the Mission, and at the same time a cause of continual difficulty and anxiety. Honduras was not a tempting place for English schoolmasters, and the Mission could not offer a tempting salary. Sanders was a thorough Missionary as well as an able teacher and organizer. He had commenced to learn the Maya language, and entered warmly into Fletcher's programme.

Sykes. A revival of Obeahism in Ruatan, by which, amongst other Methodists, two Class-leaders were carried away, showed how deep-seated African superstition was in the negro nature. Political disturbance led to the removal of a number of our people from the Bay Islands. In Honduras, as in Demerara, excessively high prices made living difficult for the Missionaries—a chronic state of things aggravated by the commercial troubles of the sixties, the great fire at Belize, and the retrenchments imposed from Bishopsgate. The letters of Fletcher and Sykes in 1864 sound a note of acute distress on this account. Patient and self-denying men, they had carried economy to a pitch endangering their physical efficiency. The anxiety and depression of mind thus occasioned, amidst so many discouraging circumstances, militated against success.

Despite all these difficulties and the lack of assistance, Fletcher established new stations in the country behind Corozal. Chief amongst these were Orange Walk, on the course of the Hondo, where the proprietor of an extensive plantation invited the Mission, and where the Spanish Indians were accessible in large numbers—here a new Circuit was formed a few years later; and Indian Church,<sup>1</sup> at the head of the New River, seventy miles above Corozal. These places both lay within British territory, but their occupation broadened the vantage-ground for advance into Yucatan.

In 1866, after the close of the American War, a door opened for the Mission in the far south of the colony, through the settlement here of a group of families migrating from the defeated southern States. They purchased an area of rich forest land on the coast, which they cleared and planted, forming a prosperous centre of population and trade in this part of the country. Their township took the name of Toledo. Amongst the first party arriving at this spot was a Methodist Episcopal Minister, who gathered a little Church about him. He and his people put themselves into communication with the British Methodists of the colony, with whom eventually they united. This was the beginning of the Toledo Circuit, with its excursions and extensions into Guatemala and Spanish Honduras westwards and southwards.

<sup>1</sup> The place took its name from the ruins of a huge heathen temple standing there. Monuments of this nature exist scattered over the more populous parts of Central America. They attest the widespread power in prehistoric times, attended with a relatively high culture, of the religion practised by the Aztecs of Mexico, who met Fernando Cortes and the Spanish invaders with so stout a resistance.

Looking in the same direction, Edward Spratt,<sup>1</sup> who filled from 1868 to 1872 Webb's vacated post at Belize, called attention to the railway it was proposed to build across Spanish Honduras from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast,<sup>2</sup> and to its prospective opportunities for the Mission. This line started from Puerto Cabalero, at the south-eastern corner of the Gulf of Honduras, some distance beyond the British border. Hundreds of labourers were being drawn from Belize for its construction, to the depleting of our Church there. Corozal, too, furnished a contingent. Spratt urged the sending of an agent to Puerto Cabalero,<sup>3</sup> if it were only to safeguard our own people removing thither. He had visited the spot and preached to a congregation of 400, most of whom had some connexion with Wesley Chapel at Belize. 'If there were religious liberty in the Republic of Honduras,'<sup>4</sup> he wrote, 'I should urge the sending of a Missionary.' In the same letter Spratt reports receiving an invitation to plant a Mission at Bocas del Toro, in the United States of Colombia,<sup>5</sup> where religious liberty was already established. Next year (1871) Fletcher visited the Governor of Yucatan, who received him cordially and gave permission for Methodist preaching in his province; the people, he said, were all Roman Catholics, but he would guarantee toleration. This Spanish Governor had read the Maya Gospels, and wished to be furnished with any other religious books published in the same language. Fletcher concludes: 'I am exceedingly pleased with the great field of labour before us here.' Alike in south and north doors of entrance to the regions beyond the colony were opening. Within the colony

<sup>1</sup> Spratt had laboured nine years in the St. Vincent and British Guiana District, when severe illness, necessitating a surgical operation, obliged him to return to England. On his recovery two years later he was appointed to Honduras. Five years he 'travelled' in the Belize and Ruatan Circuits, thence removing in 1873 to Jamaica, where he ministered for eleven years, until he met his death while still in his prime through falling from a stumbling horse. He spent his last breath in urging those who came to his help, some of whom he knew to be unconverted, to seek the Saviour. He was a man much beloved and everywhere useful, a fervent evangelist, a diligent pastor.

<sup>2</sup> In the event, this line was only pushed for a hundred miles or so into the interior, terminating a little beyond San Pedro del Sula, a place subsequently occupied by the Mission (see p. 484). It appears to have been superseded by a shorter trans-continental route, carried through Guatemala and starting from the head of the Honduras Gulf.

<sup>3</sup> Ultimately this spot became a Methodist Station, under its later name of Puerto Cortez; it is now the head of the Leeward Circuit in Spanish Honduras.

<sup>4</sup> When the Bay Islands (Ruatan) were ceded to Spanish Honduras in 1861, stipulations were made in the Treaty for the securing of liberty of worship which were not always faithfully observed.

<sup>5</sup> Bocas del Toro stands on the border line between Colombia (including the Isthmus of Panama) and Costa Rica, not very far south of the Mosquito Coast.



Archibald Taylor, the young Missionary assisting Sykes at Belize, explored the valley of the Sibun River, which runs parallel to the Rio Belize at some distance south, and found colonization advancing toward its upper reaches under the worst moral conditions. The District at this moment was supplied with *five* Missionaries—Fletcher and Sykes (at Corozal and Belize) each having an Assistant—and affairs seemed ripening for a substantial advance over the borders. In 1879, however, the revolution in Spanish Honduras violently disturbed the Bay Islands. The Methodist Minister (Spratt) was compelled to flee, and his work was stopped for three months; the people, who bravely maintained their Protestant faith, were scattered; within the next three years Ruatan Circuit was robbed of nearly half its Church membership. Sickness and misfortune reduced the District staff to its old figure of *three*: Spratt was transferred to Jamaica; the plans for extension were once more postponed. Fletcher had striven hard to raise up Native agents for the work; he laments (in 1874) the carrying off by death of some of those he had counted upon, and the seduction of others through the temptation of high salaries. He was left again without assistance, and the charge of the school tied him to Corozal. Toward the end of the seventies matters improved in the Belize Circuit; a second chapel was built in the town. The Caribs of Stann Creek began to yield to the persevering siege laid to their hearts; at last a chapel was reared at this station, eight Carib Leaders laying each a foundation-stone with his gift placed upon it.<sup>1</sup> In 1882 'Stann Creek' figures on the Stations as a distinct Circuit numbering about 100 Church members. On the other hand, the sugar-plantations suffered from the decay of their trade, and Methodist funds suffered accordingly. Our work at Orange Walk particularly declined from this cause. The Ruatan Circuit, under the care of an excellent Catechist, recovered from the injury suffered in 1872-73; in 1877 its Minister was restored in the person of Oswald Welch, who had served three years' apprenticeship at Belize.<sup>2</sup> The Ruatan

<sup>1</sup> The Caribs were a fickle folk; next year the report from Stann Creek was: 'Things going backward. . . . Something decidedly wrong.' The cold fit, however, passed, and the chapel building was resumed and completed.

<sup>2</sup> After five years in Honduras, Welch was appropriated by Jamaica; here he added twelve years to his missionary ministry. He was a steady, plodding man, 'faithful and kindly, exerting an influence which, though quiet, was deep and lasting.' In 1891 he returned to spend eighteen years in English Circuit work, and died in 1917.

Circuit was again self-supporting, though Welch reports its buildings in disrepair. Prosperity was returning, when in September a hurricane levelled the orchards, the sole wealth of the people, and plunged them into want and misery. The end of George Sykes' long term of service in Honduras came in this year, when he returned to England to repair his health; his later distinguished services in the West Indian field are noted.

Deprived of his old companion, Fletcher had three young men for his colleagues whose experience of Honduras was brief; in addition to Welch in Ruatan these were Edward R. Gibbens and William H. Atkin, stationed at Belize. The former had been transferred to Honduras after six years in Demerara, Atkin, Gibbens' helper at Belize, served for nine years in Honduras, until his transference (in 1886) to Jamaica, where he rose to be Chairman of his District. A strong and determined man and an enthusiastic Missionary, he acquired a good knowledge of Spanish, and gave promise of notable service to the Honduras Mission, when his work there was cut short. Ultimately he returned to England in 1905, and finished his course six years later. Gibbens in 1878 urged the Missionary Committee to occupy Guatemala (the capital of the State of that name, lying toward the Pacific), which had a population of 40,000—a leading city of Central America; it was now accessible by rail. He was assured that Popery was at a discount there, that liberty existed for preaching the Gospel, and a great harvest awaited an effective Preacher. Fletcher supported this representation, and Atkin was eager to make the attempt. The Committee could not find either man or means for the undertaking. The District must be still limited to its three Circuits and four Ministers. In such a field forbidden expansion spells stagnation.

In 1878 to 1879 a chapel was built at Corozal, costing £700, through the munificence of John Jex, a staunch Methodist layman of Belize. This erection gave stability to our position in that town. Writing about this date Gibbens describes Corozal as

a Mission station pure and simple, in the midst of Spanish-speaking people and the rankest Popery, where ours is the only Protestant Church; no station is more worthy of your [the Missionary Committee's] support.

By this time Welch's health demanded his removal from Honduras. Atkin replaced him at Ruatan, and Bishopsgate designated a (very dark) coloured Probationer from Jamaica to replace the latter. A loud protest at once arose, on the ground (1) of *the complexion* of the proposed Minister, which was objectionable to the white congregation at Belize, and (2) of his hailing *from Jamaica*. 'I can give you no idea,' writes Gibbens, 'of the antipathy of Belize people to Jamaica people. It resembles the hatred of Jews to Samaritans!' Regular sailings between Honduras and Jamaica had ceased; one had to go all the way round by New York to reach the former colony from the latter. Hence when West Indian Methodism set up for itself a few years later it proved impracticable to associate the Honduras District with the Western Conference (consisting mainly of the Jamaica Districts), and at its own instance it remained under British direction.

In 1880-81 the Honduras staff suffered an irreparable loss. Richard Fletcher, after twenty-five years of manifold, self-effacing toil, and of hope continually baffled for lack of richly deserved help, must perforce retreat; his much-enduring strength was broken. Regaining health, he 'travelled' for twenty-five years in the English work, and died at an advanced age in 1907. Gibbens took his place in the Synod of January, 1881, as Acting Chairman; but in that year he too found it necessary to withdraw; and Joel Peters, who had fifteen years experience of West Indian work (in the Antigua and Jamaica Districts), was put into the Honduras chair. Peters was a capable administrator and an active, buoyant Missionary, but he stayed only two years in Honduras; he was solicitous about his children's education, for which facilities were wanting here, and returned in 1883 to Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> Atkin, for his age, had a remarkably strong grasp of Honduras problems, and inherited Fletcher's policy. His appointment to the Chairmanship in 1883 raised hopes of advance; alas, his removal also became necessary in the following year.

With the retirement of Fletcher, Gibbens, and Welch, but two Missionaries remained on the Honduras field—at Belize Peters, new to the ground; at Corozal Atkin, of five years'

<sup>1</sup> Like his predecessors, Peters complains of the *high prices* of the necessities of life in this colony, making it impossible to maintain his family decently upon the stipend allowed.

standing.<sup>1</sup> Ruatan had to be left again to the care of a Catechist. In 1882 the vacancies were filled by taking into the ministry a couple of local school-teachers—George Alexander Frazer, a white native of Nassau and a man of talent, who for long had served faithfully as schoolmaster and Local Preacher at Belize, but was snatched away by death from his new calling in a couple of years ; and Harwood Little, an English Minister's son, who soon enlisted in the Anglican clergy. At the same time a permanent and valuable accession came to the staff in James W. Lord, who laboured in Honduras from 1881 to 1889 and 1900 to 1910, during the second term presiding as District Chairman. Lord acquired a mastery of Spanish, turned to advantage later by his service in Madrid from 1890 to 1894, and at Barcelona from 1916 onwards.

Peters and Atkin repeated Fletcher's appeals to the Mission House for helpers, setting in a convincing light the opportunities for extension the District presented. The result was that in the early eighties the Honduras Mission took a fresh start. On the coming of Thomas Nicholas Robert—a lively and enterprising Guernseyman who gave six years to Honduras, appointed in the first instance to the newly opened High School at Belize<sup>2</sup>—Peters writes :

There are open doors all around us ; and if we had the money I could find employment for three additional men at once !

The Stann Creek Circuit, with Lord for its first appointee, was now separated from Belize ; embracing five stations along the coast, it was worked mainly by boat. Four other new Circuits were designated on the Stations—including ' Orange Walk ' and ' Belize River '—with the familiar ' One wanted ' attached to their names. Here was, at any rate, work carved out for the Mission, and a pledge of reinforcement given by the home Committee. The Ruatan Circuit, after its many vicissitudes, was reviving under the ministry of Frazer. He describes pathetically the neglected condition of his Circuit—

<sup>1</sup> Left in charge of Corozal by Fletcher, Atkin found the Spanish preaching, in which he was as yet unpractised, a great difficulty—often three Spanish sermons were required in one day. The care of the School also devolved upon him, for which he possessed little aptitude. This hindered his proper work and barred all Circuit progress.

<sup>2</sup> Robert (pronounced French-wise, as if *Robère*) was known as a man of order and exactness in Methodist law, possessing at the same time some gifts of imagination. After his return from the West he travelled for nearly thirty years in home Circuits.



chapels dilapidated ; schools, though well attended, wretchedly furnished.<sup>1</sup> The people were generally willing and liberal ; but they remained poor through the uncertainties of their business of fruit-growing and export, and their native improvidence and love of finery. Frazer gained an exceptional hold upon the Bay Islanders ; his early death was a sad blow to the Mission.

The proposals for the West Indian Conferences met with unqualified disapproval in Honduras. The attachment and virtual subordination of this District to *Jamaica*, they assumed, formed a situation most repugnant to Honduras feeling. The Chairman Peters, himself a former Jamaica Missionary, wrote in 1883 reporting the unanimously adverse opinion of his Synod :

In that view I entirely agree. It would be disastrous to the work here should we become a part of the Jamaica Conference. To speak of nothing else, it takes four weeks for a letter to go from here to Jamaica, whereas it goes to London (via New Orleans) in eighteen days.

Robert spent the summer holiday of the same year in visiting Spanish Honduras, and gives a stirring account of his journey. At Puerto Cortez (formerly Cabalero) he found a group of people eager for Methodist teaching, and held thronged meetings in private houses. Many old Belizians were amongst the crowd which listened through open doors and windows. Generous collections were made at these gatherings, while promises to the amount of £150 (of which sum £36 was paid down) were given to further the planting of a Mission in this town. From Puerto Cortez Robert went on to San Pedro del Sula, some distance up the railway—a town of about 2,000 people, supplying an important centre for trade with the interior—where he had a similar reception. Both places have since become Methodist Stations. At Puerto Cortez, amongst the Methodist settlers from Belize and Corozal, four Classes were formed, and arrangements were made for regular worship ; a Sunday School was also set on foot. Robert performed several Protestant marriages, which the whole town turned out to witness, making the occasion a public festival. Popery appeared to be at a discount throughout the country. The Jesuits had been expelled ; only the Dominican priests were left, and these in small numbers.

<sup>1</sup> No education grants were obtainable from the Spanish (Romanist) Government of the Republic.

The more intelligent [writes Robert] are without a religion. Those who care about the matter think that the Roman Catholics have had their turn and have failed ; and that the Protestants should now see what they can do. All the Spanish gentlemen with whom I have conversed urge the immediate occupation of important centres in the interior, and are confident that liberal support would be given. . . . If any one is willing to support a man in this work, I am willing to go as his fellow labourer.

Being conversant with French, Robert found the acquisition of Spanish not difficult.

Like Atkin at Corozal, so Robert at Belize was impatient of the school-work imposed on him. The Chairman implored the Committee to find lay schoolmasters for the Mission ; but the old difficulties remained—the deterrent nature of the climate, and the expensiveness of living in the colony, making the salaries offered insufficient. The engrossment of the slender missionary staff in school-teaching has sorely hampered the Honduras Mission. Nevertheless, the District made notable advance ; its Church membership increased by a fourth between 1880 and 1884.

Robert sent home an interesting account of the colony at this period. It was a great country in the making, seething with heterogeneous and changeful human elements.

Our chief want [the Missionary declares], next to the gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit, is the presence and service of godly, influential laymen, who will bring their religion with them and who have a zeal for God.

The prospect of entering the Spanish Republics and evangelizing their half-Romanist, half-heathen population was at this juncture more hopeful than ever before ; but it remained a *prospect*. Even within the colony, as Peters testified in 1883, three out of the six political divisions were without any evangelical ministry. ' That we should move at once,' he writes, ' is imperative, because everything in the colony has begun to move.' In the next year Atkin laid before the Committee in London a well-thought-out plan for the occupation of the southern part of the colony, with extensions into Guatemala and Spanish Honduras.

## XIV

### THE WEST INDIAN CONFERENCES

Conception and Purpose of the Conference—Hope deferred—A Secretarial Visit—The Report—Directions from London—Influence of George Sargeant—Opinion on the Field—A Draft-Plan—Two Annual Conferences and a General Triennial Conference—Constitution of these—Financial Arrangements—The first President—An Optimistic Report—Nineteen Years of Separation—Causes of Failure—Financial Necessity—Dearth of Ministerial Supply—Administration of T. B. Butcher—Educational Difficulties—A Cry of Distress—The Winston-Smith Commission—Recommendations—Retransference in 1904—A West Indian Fund—A Quickened Life.

THE plan adopted by the British Conference in 1883 for the creation of an independent Methodist Church in the West Indies had been long in gestation. In conception and purpose the Conferences of this Mission were older than those of Australia and British North America. At the outset Dr. Coke arranged for a regular meeting of the little band of Missionaries planted in the islands, to which he gave the name of 'Conference,' and in which he saw the seed of a wide and flourishing growth. But as the Mission spread, distance and expense forbade the continuance of this practice, and the unity of the scattered island stations came to lie in the unity of management and control at head quarters in London. When the system of Connexional Districts and their Annual Synods was introduced from England geographical conditions made its working imperfect and costly, and evils arose from the defective oversight and lack of uniformity which it was impossible wholly to obviate. Yet the population the Missionaries had to deal with and the problems arising in their work were much the same all through the field; common counsel and unity of action were highly desirable on this account. There was especial need in West Indian Methodism for a strong centralized administration and a consultative and disciplinary authority in which every section of the Church should have its voice.

Considerations pressing more strongly upon the Missionary Society and its supporters at home, and urging their thoughts in the same direction, arose as well from the needs of other regions of the world as from the age of the West Indian Mission, its numerical strength, the amount of labour and moneyed capital, and the outlay of human life, expended in its promotion since Thomas Coke's landing at Antigua in 1786. Such arguments spoke loudly for the duty of self-support as incumbent on our West Indian people; it was high time that, after all that had been spent upon them, the Missions of this country should have reached some maturity. Like grown-up children, they should prepare to shift for themselves and relieve the parental purse of their maintenance. And self-support must carry with it the prerogatives and dignities of self-rule; the hour had struck for West Indian Methodism to assume the responsibilities of a full-grown Church life. These reflections had formed a chronic subject of the Missionary Committee's letters to the West Indian Synods from Dr. Beecham's time onwards; their force and justice was admitted by the Missionaries, who in their private and public letters, and now and again in their speeches on the English platform, declared that the West Indian Methodists were sensible of their obligations, and were striving to reach the goal of financial independence, to which indeed the more advanced Circuits already approximated. At the climax of the Church's prosperity, in and about the year 1845, the goal was almost in sight for the entire West Indian field:

A little more time and patience [it was said] and the West Indies will burden British Methodism no more; our people there will be able to bear their own burdens and to carry on from their own resources the great work for God that devolves upon them.

We have seen in Chapters X-XIII how these hopes and professions were frustrated, how the negro Methodists after their liberation from the house of bondage came to wander for half a century in the wilderness of poverty and spiritual dependence.

The missionary leaders at home and abroad continued nevertheless to hold up the ideal of independence before the discouraged West Indian Churches. The circumstances of the Society—especially the loss of income at home due to controversy and secession, and the urgent calls from the Far



East—necessitated its release from the obligations now sufficiently discharged toward the colonies—toward the West Indies most of all. Many were saying that at any cost this burden must be cast off; that West Indian Methodism had been nursed and subsidized too lavishly and too long; that it would never learn to walk alone till its crutches were gone! When, in the early eighties, the South African Conference, in the wake of those of North America and Australasia, had been successfully launched, the demand for a similar course in the case of the West Indies became irresistible. Recently a gleam of revived commercial prosperity had visited the islands, affording hope that the financial obstacles to home rule in this quarter would disappear.

In the winter 1878-79 Marmaduke Osborn, the Secretary in whose charge the oversight of this province lay, was sent out to inspect its Churches and Missions and to report on their prospects of self-maintenance and their fitness for self-government. The Secretary was accompanied through most of his visitation by George Sargeant, then Chairman of the Jamaica District, and an advocate of independence. Osborn found that West Indian Methodism was not yet ripe for separation, that the incapacity of the laity for Church business, and the poverty of the bulk of the people, were such as to forbid the hope of their being able in the near future to maintain their ministry and Circuit institutions without support and guidance from outside. The consummation was devoutly to be wished. There were those amongst the West Indian Ministers and laymen who were eager for it; but the great majority, and especially the more experienced and responsible Missionaries, judged the attempt under present conditions to be unsafe, if not impracticable. The Missionary Committee and British Methodism must have further patience with their children until their training was more advanced, and until prosperity should return to their industries, before leaving them to their own devices. Such was the verdict arrived at by the representative of the Mission House, and the advice he gave to the Missionary Committee at that time. Osborn recommended, however, with a view to drawing the Missionary Districts closer together and preparing them for ultimate union under a Conference of their own at a future date, that a representative Committee of Ministers, meeting annually, should be formed

for consultative purposes, after the fashion of the Triennial Council in South Africa. Osborn's report was not circulated in the West Indies ; it remained in the hands of the Missionary Committee in London.

On the receipt of the above report a long discussion ensued in the Missionary Committee, which ended in the rejection both of the plans for an Affiliated Conference and for the preparatory Committee, or Council, which Osborn recommended. The principal resolution adopted ran thus :

That before giving any further attention to proposals either for a Conference or a Representative Body, it is essential that a better basis should be laid in an improved Circuit and District organization, by which laymen shall be made to share privileges and responsibilities which have hitherto belonged to Ministers only

In short, West Indian Methodism must conform to the British pattern before it could be recognized as a full-fledged Methodist Church. The effect of the recent enlargement of the home Conference and the new powers acquired by British Methodist laymen may be traced in the terms of this resolution. Lay representation appeared to be a panacea for the ills of the Church ! Detailed resolutions followed, enjoining that lay stewardships and official meetings of the Society and Circuit should be set on foot wherever they were not in existence ; that suitable young Local Preachers should be sought out for the Native ministry and assisted to qualify themselves ; that the people should be instructed in the principles and working of the Methodist system ; and so on. An N.B. was added to the effect that it was not supposed that they could be carried out instantly and uniformly ; but ' a commencement is to be made without delay, and progress should be as rapid as prudence and safety permit.' The above directions did but repeat the homilies addressed from Bishopsgate to the West Indian Missionaries any time these thirty years past, with which they would have gladly complied had the material been available. In the dearth of educated laymen, these exhortations were wasted breath ; it availed nothing that the Committee insisted on inquiries being made at Synod as to the steps taken in each Circuit to establish a complete Methodist organization, and promised that in three years' time an inspector should be sent from England to ascertain the progress made. Such regulations the Missionaries felt were a reflection

upon their zeal and sincerity in regard to matters about which they were more solicitous than their critics.

Directions were also given for a more particular and regular inquiry into the condition of chapel property, and a full report to the Missionary Committee on this subject. Other improvements in financial and business administration were suggested, making for greater clearness and uniformity in accounts and the reduction of expenses. A Financial Sub-Committee was to be appointed for each District, to meet in September, which should deal with extraordinary and incidental expenses outside the regular maintenance charges, and report thereon year by year to London in anticipation of the ensuing Synod. The Missionary Committee, in issuing this elaborate scheme of reforms and improvements, evidently had no thought of superseding the present order at any proximate date ; the idea of a West Indian Conference was postponed.

The above decision, however, did not lay to rest the ' Conference ' question, either in England or in the islands. Its speedy revival may be connected with the return to England of George Sargeant,<sup>1</sup> who was an ardent, influential, and persuasive advocate of self-rule for the West Indian Churches. For years he had been leading and urging the Jamaican Methodists as their Chairman toward this goal. Acquainted with the West Indian field in all its aspects and requirements, he saw no reason to doubt that with due courage and faith, and with proper leadership on the part of the Ministers, the Districts generally would come to the same mind. He was now a member of the Missionary Committee in London, and his influence in its counsels was justly great. On the other hand it was common knowledge that Sargeant's opinions on the question were shared by few of his English brethren. Henry Hurd, who died about this time, so long Chairman of the Windward Islands District—a Missionary of unsurpassed experience and judgement—regarded the West Indian Mission as far from fit, either morally or financially, to look after itself. And while Jonathan Richardson, the comparatively young Native Chairman of the Bahamas, was eager for the enterprise, his neighbour Chairman, Chambers, of Antigua, also island-born and a man of great ability and discernment, senior to Richardson, vehemently opposed it.

<sup>1</sup> He ' travelled ' in English Circuits from 1880 to 1884.

Leading laymen in England chafed continually under the West Indian burden. They reiterated maxims adopted in regard to colonial politics—that ability is called out by responsibility, and that nothing is healthier for a young community than to be thrown on its own resources ; so long as the West Indian Church was nursed and coddled, they believed it would never grow out of its childishness ; it would learn to provide for itself when it knew that it *must*. The ablest laymen on the Missionary Committee at that period probably were Thomas Percival Bunting (son of Dr. Jabez Bunting) and Henry Hartley Fowler (afterwards Lord Wolverhampton and Secretary of State for India), who powerfully urged opinions of this nature, which gained increasing acceptance in home Methodism. Their contention was supported by communications from certain lay gentlemen in the colonies, who resented what they considered the over-management of Ministers in Church business, and expressed their disappointment with the result of the Osborn visitation.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the South African Conference in 1883, effected after long negotiation and preparation in a country where there existed a blending of colours and clashing of race interests and prejudices resembling that characterizing the West Indies, stimulated the desire to achieve a parallel success in the latter field. This achievement would complete the ring of Affiliated Conferences in the colonies by conferring independence on the oldest and the most cherished of Methodist Missions. Hence no sooner was the work of setting up the South African Conference accomplished than the Missionary Committee, returning to the task formerly declined, began to study plans for putting the West Indies on an independent footing. Marmaduke Osborn appears to have changed his mind since 1879 and swung round to the views of the reformers. The matter having been long in agitation, it was deemed wiser to introduce at once a complete Conference constitution, rather than to proceed, as in South Africa, by a tentative, intermediate stage.

The English Missionaries took alarm at the revival of the 'Conference' movement in the Committee ; and one of them,

<sup>1</sup> A number of Native Ministers made their sentiments known in England to the like effect.



under the signature 'Discretus,'<sup>1</sup> addressed to *The Methodist* newspaper a letter which represented unquestionably the standpoint of most of his fellows. From this communication, made early in 1883, the following sentences are abstracted :

I have no fear of being contradicted when I say that the Native Ministers in the West Indies are almost, if not quite, unanimous in the opinion that the time has arrived for the settlement of the question (of West Indian administration) by the immediate formation of an Affiliated Conference ; but the European Ministers are very nearly, if not quite, as unanimous in the opposite judgement. There are some who, while prepared to accept the principle and to admit that the event must take place sooner or later, nevertheless contend that it should be prepared for by a series of evolutionary changes, which have not yet been introduced . . . while others maintain that it is very questionable whether, under the peculiar circumstances of our West Indian Missions, it is desirable to entertain the notion of an independent, self-governing Conference at all.

'Discretus' points out as an essential difference between the West Indies and other British colonies where the method of the Affiliated Conference had been adopted, that each of those other countries was occupied by numerous and prosperous British communities, amongst which Methodism had rooted itself with the prospects of large development, supplying the basis for independent Church institutions and aggressive missionary work. In the West Indies these favouring conditions, indispensable for the success of the project in hand, were wanting, and laymen competent for Church business and assistance in counsel were few and far between.

'Discretus' goes on to say :

The West Indian Churches are very far from being self-supporting ; nor is there any reasonable hope that the present income of the Societies will be materially increased. The large grants which many of the Churches get from the Colonial Governments are a source of income to which many of the Ministers are opposed on principle,

though accepting it under stress of necessity and not anticipating its permanence.

Furthermore [he adds] some parts of our West Indian Mission are almost overwhelmed with debt on their properties ; and the question may well be asked, If the Churches can scarcely make ends meet *now*, with large Government grants and while under the watchful eye of

<sup>1</sup> This important letter, we are permitted to state, was from the pen of the now venerable Henry Adams, at that time a young Missionary in the St. Vincent District.

the Mission House, what will become of the Mission financially when both Government and Committee grants cease and the Mission House has no longer its paternal prerogative and responsibilities?

Another caution this unflattering prophet urges. West Indian Methodism, he intimates, however it may develop and improve its Native ministry, must for a long time to come depend on its supply of European recruits, which there will be a great difficulty in procuring under the rule of a West Indian Conference.

The class of people who, as a rule, compose our congregations is not such as to lead us reasonably to expect to obtain a supply of Ministers commensurate either in number or in fitness with the requirements of our West Indian work. There are very few at present in training, nor is it at all clear how the quantity of Native candidates for the ministry is to be increased or the quality improved in the future.

The writer concludes by begging British Methodism to pause and examine the West Indian situation more thoroughly before committing itself to the charges contemplated.

Notwithstanding the theoretical soundness of their position who differ from us, and notwithstanding the universally accepted truism that the West Indies *ought* to be ready for a Conference,

the facts demonstrating their unreadiness stubbornly remain, and will not be altered by ignoring them. He advises the British Conference for the present to be content with extending the functions of the West Indian Synods and enlarging their areas, with a view to strengthening them in counsel and authority. Let the Missionary Society see how this expedient answers, and 'how their increased power, under its continued authority, is used,' before it takes the final step, which existing conditions do not warrant and which may prove disastrous.

The Mission House had, however, made up its mind, and did not shrink from overruling the prevalent judgement of Missionaries engaged in the field. A draft of its plans had been communicated to the Synods of the previous January (1883), not for discussion of the principle, which was assumed as settled by the decision of the home Committee,<sup>1</sup> but solely

<sup>1</sup> In the case of the other Affiliated Conferences—of America, Australasia, South Africa—the *principle* of independence was submitted to the vote of the Synods concerned; indeed, the initiative in the whole business rested largely with the people on the spot, and the new order was desired by them; whereas the West Indians had a

for examination of details. The draft-plan had been variously received in the different West Indian Synods ; only in Jamaica was it regarded in a hopeful spirit. Antigua was severely critical ; not endorsing the principle of the Committee's scheme, this Synod declined to examine it in detail, except to point out the necessity of greater consideration for destitute Circuits and of an increase in the amount of the diminishing yearly grants proposed to be made during the early period of the new régime. The adverse views prevailing here lost nothing in sharpness of expression through having Thomas Chambers for their exponent. The Windward District (St. Vincent, Barbados, British Guiana, &c.) was less decided in its judgment. The Circuit life and lay activity of Barbados were more advanced than those of any other place outside of Jamaica ; here some keen advocates of home rule were found. Elsewhere in the District opinion was conservative—the St. Vincent and British Guiana Circuits, suffering from recent troubles and diversions, did not stand to gain by increased self-government, while Grenada and Trinidad were quite at the missionary stage, requiring liberal help and stimulus from home. The sagacious but eminently moderate and conciliatory George Sykes, overseer of this wide and heterogeneous field, was not the man to express his misgivings about the Mission House policy in any uncompromising fashion. The course adopted by the Bahamas<sup>1</sup> and Honduras respectively—Districts outlying to the north and west—has been already intimated ; the unification of these two provinces with the rest of the West Indies was manifestly impracticable. Honduras had a peculiar aversion from Jamaica ; the Bahamians lived in another world from their fellow islanders. Both regions lay off the tracks of general West Indian intercourse ; they were practically nearer to New York and London than to Kingston or Barbados. These Districts the Committee reluctantly excluded from the union.<sup>2</sup>

constitution framed for them, not to say thrust upon them. Of course the Missionary Society and the home Conference had a perfect right to say to the latter : ' We shall not be responsible for your maintenance and management on the old terms any longer.'

<sup>1</sup> Expostulations of an alarming tenor were received at the Mission House from Bahamian laymen as well as from Ministers.

<sup>2</sup> The Haiti Synod was very small, and its voice could not be loudly heard. This Mission, embracing Santo Domingo (Spanish Haiti), which was at one time attached to the Bahama District along with Turk's Islands, lay within the orbit of Jamaica, and was conveniently administered, in respect of communication, from that centre. On the other hand there was no Methodist Mission in greater need of the fostering care of the mother Church than that of Haiti, and Jamaica had no means of providing the French-speaking Ministers that Haiti required.

After receiving the reports of the West Indian Synods,<sup>1</sup> the Missionary Committee revised and completed its plan of affiliation, which was laid before the British Conference of 1883 and adopted. In the case of the Australasian Conference, the experience of twenty years had shown the necessity of subdividing the vast area (including New Zealand) covered by this designation; the expense and difficulty of convening every year a representative assembly from all the Districts of Australia, New Zealand, and the South Sea Islands were found to be prohibitive. Moreover, in the Australasian Connexion the widely separated limbs of the giant body had acquired a distinct character,<sup>2</sup> and felt the need of some organ suitable to express their provincial consciousness and to regulate their local Methodist life. Accordingly in 1874 the one Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Australasia branched out into four sectional yearly Conferences, subordinated to a General Conference meeting at more distant intervals, to which superior and controlling functions were reserved. This precedent, in a somewhat simplified form, was followed in the present instance. The difficulties due to dispersal were as obvious in the Far West as in the Far East, though existing upon a smaller scale, while the poverty of West Indian Methodists made considerations of expense even more important. In the gathering of Synods this burden pressed sorely on local finances—how much more when the added cost of Conference travelling was imposed! The West Indies scheme therefore provided for two parallel Annual Conferences, Eastern and Western, the former embracing the Antigua and St. Vincent Districts as hitherto known, the latter Jamaica and Haiti. The Eastern Conference had the larger Church membership (above 23,000; the Western close on 20,000), while the Western Conference had the advantage of concentration and easier travelling. Had the Bahamas and Honduras been associated with Jamaica, as was first designed, the two halves would have been evenly balanced in both respects. Above the Eastern and Western Annual Conferences was set the General Conference, to meet triennially,

<sup>1</sup> Their minds showed the same reluctance against separation in 1883 as in 1870, on the occasion of M. C. Osborn's visit. At the earlier time the Districts leaned to the intermediate, preparatory plan of a representative Council for the West Indies falling short of the authority and responsibility of a Conference.

<sup>2</sup> For this reason New Zealand, some years later, detached itself completely from the rest of Methodist Australasia.



providing a supreme Church authority, the keystone of Connexional unity.

The Districts, with their annual Synods and Chairmen, were retained in their established functions, owing allegiance henceforth to the provincial Conference instead of to the Missionary Committee. The old Districts were subdivided, so as to furnish more manageable areas ; it was expected that this change would make for stricter oversight and a better attendance of laymen at Synod. Ten Districts replaced the former four. Jamaica was parted into First, Second, and Third Jamaica<sup>1</sup> ; St. Kitts, with its group of islands, including Tortola, was severed from Antigua, to which Montserrat and Dominica remained attached. The new Districts of Barbados, British Guiana, and Trinidad, with Tobago and Grenada, were formed by the side of St. Vincent.

The General Conference was to be a select body, composed in its Pastoral Session of ten Ministers chosen in equal numbers by the two Annual Conferences, together with seventeen official members (District Chairmen, President, and Vice-Presidents, &c.) ; with these an equal quota of laymen were associated in the Representative Session,<sup>2</sup> made up of the Lay Treasurers of Connexional Funds, not exceeding four in number, with the addition of elected representatives from the Annual Conferences. This higher court had no power to revise or control the disciplinary action of the Annual Conferences ; it might not interfere with the stationing and appointment of Ministers, the admission of candidates to the ministry, nor the oversight and ordination of Preachers on trial. Its duties extended to matters concerning the transfer of Ministers as between the Eastern and Western Conferences ; the spiritual state of the Societies at large ; the missionary work of the Connexion, and its relations to the parent Society ; its worship ; its literature, and all appointments and business arrangements connected therewith ; its dealings with Government, and with other public bodies ; the control of Connexional Funds, including chapel affairs and Church property generally. The larger part of Conference business, especially on the Pastoral side,

<sup>1</sup> A fourth District was created in Jamaica in 1886, raising the total number to eleven.

<sup>2</sup> The division of labour between Pastoral and Representative Sessions was identical with that established at home. As far as possible, the Affiliated Conferences were repetitions in miniature of the British Conference.

was entrusted to the annual assembly, whose decision in matters of doctrine, discipline, and character, and of Circuit appointment, admitted of no appeal.

The Annual Conference consisted of one-third of the ordained Ministers in each District,<sup>1</sup> chosen by ballot, together with the District Chairmen, the President of the General Conference, a Vice-President elected by the Annual Conference in Pastoral Session, and its Secretary similarly chosen. To these were added for the Representative Session an equal number of laymen, including two Lay Treasurers selected by the preceding Conference, the balance on the lay side being made up by election from the Districts in an agreed proportion. The co-ordination of the two Annual Conferences was secured not only by means of the supervision the General Conference exercised in certain departments, but also through the provision that its President should be the Chairman of both Annual Conferences during his three years of office. The Vice-President chosen by the Annual Assembly was at hand to replace the President should he be prevented from attendance, and to discharge in his absence Presidential duties locally arising in the course of the year. In case of the President's death or incapacitation, his place was to be filled by the senior Vice-President. The first President of the new order was appointed by the British Conference; his successors were to be elected by the same body, on the nomination of the Ministers of the West Indian General Conference. Apart from this condition, the Affiliated Conference was untrammelled by the mother Church; only it was stipulated that

any new legislation by the West Indian General Conference must be submitted through the Missionary Committee to the Yearly (British) Conference for approval at its first meeting after such legislation is proposed . . . and shall come into operation only when such approval has been officially notified to the President of the West Indian Conference for the time being.

European Ministers already, or hereafter, sent out by the Missionary Committee to labour on the West Indian field, while entirely at the disposal and under the jurisdiction of the

<sup>1</sup> The exclusion of all except elected representatives from the Pastoral Session became a grievance amongst the West Indian Ministers, for this was contrary to the practice of the mother Conference, which admits all Ministers in Full Connexion residing in the District where the Conference is held, and others who may have permission from their Synod to attend at their own charges, to sit in the assembly on equal terms with the delegates.

local Conference so long as they remained in the colonies, were entitled, on the recommendation of that Conference, approved by the Missionary Committee, to be transferred to the home ministry. Of this permission free use soon began to be made ; and the relations of men so returning to the home funds proved a matter of difficult adjustment.

A schedule of ' Financial Arrangements ' <sup>1</sup> designed to facilitate the working of the new system and to ease the transition to Connexional self-support was attached to the Plan. <sup>2</sup> Its provisions were in the nature of temporary grants, mostly for the term of seven years, to needy and embarrassed financial interests. The Haiti, British Guiana, Antigua, and St. Kitts Districts were substantially aided in this way. <sup>3</sup> To encourage the development of the native ministry, a bounty was given to the York Castle Institution for each ministerial student in training ; the like assistance was promised in the case of the similar school projected for the Eastern Conference. Toward founding the latter Institute the parent Society was directed to subscribe £1,000, with £250 per annum toward working expenses for the first seven years. The heavy debt due to the Society on its account with the British Guiana Synod was remitted, and a number of loans contracted in this District were to be repaid on its behalf ; the total amount of the obligations thus discharged was nearly £5,000. To each of the Annual Conferences £500 was given from the same source to form the nucleus of the ' Worn-out Ministers' and Ministers' Widows' Fund ' they were expected jointly to establish. The missionary funds hitherto raised by West Indian Circuits in contribution to the parent Society <sup>4</sup> were henceforth to be paid into the local treasury, and utilized through the District Committees for aggressive work at home. For seven years to come the parent Society undertook to supply Missionaries required for new stations, paying in the case of Haiti the whole cost of

<sup>1</sup> Under the previous colonial ' Affiliation ' schemes a lump sum had been voted to each new Conference, for use at its discretion, in the form of a yearly diminishing subsidy based on the normal grants of the Missionary Committee as made in previous years to the several incorporated Districts. In this case it seemed wiser to allocate specific grants to the particular objects for which assistance was deemed necessary.

<sup>2</sup> See *Minutes*, 1884, pp. 369-81.

<sup>3</sup> Apart from Haiti, the District subsidies were confined to the Eastern Conference, which also had the advantage in a number of its Churches of Government grants allowed only for schools in the west.

<sup>4</sup> These funds had, in fact, been already in great part retained for local missionary use in the West Indies.

outfit and passage, in the case of other Districts half the costs.

The last item in the above 'Arrangements' was a novel provision—the supplying (for seven years) of a salary for the President of Conference, which set him free from Circuit responsibilities so that he might occupy himself in visiting and actively superintending his far-flung diocese. The above grants and contributions, though forming no permanent endowment and falling far short of the pecuniary aid West Indian Methodism had been accustomed to receive, were generous and well-devised ; they helped the daughter Church to set up house for herself. But she must learn henceforth to manage her own affairs and pay her own way.

George Sargeant, as the Minister of outstanding ability and influence in West Indian Methodism, the energetic advocate of the new constitution and chief adviser in the framing of it, was marked out for its first President. He made his residence at Bridgetown, in Barbados, because this post, though central neither geographically nor ecclesiastically, afforded the best facilities of communication alike with England and the West Indies generally. British vessels trading to the Caribbean Sea usually touched first at this island ; from it traffic radiated to the other colonies.

Though now far past his youth, Sargeant entered on his duties with enthusiasm. During the six years (1884-90) through which he endured the burdens and fatigue of a travelling Presidency he rendered priceless service to his Church and the West Indian people. No other man could have inaugurated the new order and given it such a chance and prospect of success as he did. The records speak of his dignified and urbane bearing in the Conference chair, his fine combination of authority and suavity, his unaffected brotherliness and companionableness shown alike to old and young and to men of every shade of colour ; of his unfailing good-temper and delightful sense of humour ; of his grasp of affairs and 'perfect acquaintance with almost every detail' of West Indian life ; of 'the chivalrous ardour and vehemence' with which he flung himself into his work—a union of qualities admirably fitted to the task he had undertaken. Had George Sargeant been ten years younger and able to fill the Presidential chair for another decade, it is conceivable that his attempt would



have been carried through to triumphant success and the West Indian Conferences would have won a secure independence.

In 1891, rendering to the British Conference the account of his stewardship, Sargeant said that there had been many prognostications of failure at the launching of the enterprise in which he had been engaged—and these not without reason. The birth of the new Church coincided with another severe depression in West Indian industry ; many sugar estates were abandoned ; thousands of labourers emigrated to Panama and elsewhere. Government subsidies had been withheld, in one District to the extent of £1,000 annually. Jamaica suffered from a two years' epidemic of small-pox. Despite the adverse circumstances, he declared that Methodism had made ' advance all along the line ' ; independence had called forth fresh vigour in the West Indian Churches. They counted at the present time 4,380 more Church members than in 1884,<sup>1</sup> and the number of scholars had grown proportionately. Six thousand pounds had been raised on the field for trust-purposes within this period, and more chapels built than during the thirty preceding years. The York Castle High School now contained one hundred boys ; its pupils had repeatedly won the University scholarship offered by the Government to Jamaican youths. New Missions had been started in the formerly French St. Lucia and the Danish St. Thomas<sup>2</sup> ; Panama had been occupied besides, from which Methodism was looking out toward South America.<sup>3</sup> This speech was coloured by Sargeant's characteristic optimism, and showed his habit of looking on the bright side of things ; many of those who heard it must have felt a keen disappointment at the reports which came from the West Indies a few years later. But at the date of his return to England (1891) the speaker might well regard the founding of the independent West Indian Church as an accomplished fact. If, as his biographer writes,<sup>4</sup> ' he did not show the

<sup>1</sup> In comparing the West Indian membership returns, as given in the *Minutes* for 1884 and 1891—the two dates Sargeant had in view—it must be remembered that the Bahamas and Honduras had been severed from the W.I. province since the former year.

<sup>2</sup> These two additions completed the Methodist occupation of the archipelago, apart from the Spanish (R.C.) Cuba and Porto Rico, the French (R.C.) Martinique and Guadeloupe, with other slight exceptions.

<sup>3</sup> Our Stations on the Costa Rica (Pacific) coast were occupied a little later.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Life of George Sargeant*, *Wesleyan Missionary* (C. H. Kelly, 1901), by the Rev. F. Rought Wilson, an interesting and stimulating piece of biography, which might have been fuller with advantage.

prescience that could anticipate the varied forces which would militate against the success of some of his later plans . . . one cannot but admire the splendid faith and courage ' with which George Sargeant conceived those plans and addressed himself to their execution. He set an example which it will be for others, in happier times, to follow to full success ; he laid the foundation on which more favoured builders will rear the complete edifice.

Conducting the first General Conference in 1885, Sargeant was elected President of the next, which was held three years later, and of the third assembly, meeting in 1891. Being now in his seventy-fourth year, he felt by this time the necessity of seeking his native land, and sailed homewards from Barbados in the following spring, promising, however, to resume his work in the colonies before long, should God permit. This purpose remained unfulfilled. He had reached the limit of his strength, and retired in 1892 to settle at the town of Chelmsford, in Essex. Here he died, somewhat suddenly, seven years later. He was spared witnessing the breakdown of the system to the building of which he had given his best energies and ripest years ; but such work for God as George Sargeant's is never lost.

We may not trace in detail the course of West Indian Methodism through the nineteen years of separation ; the fact that it passed for the time out of the charge of the Missionary Society excludes it from our purview. But we have to take account of the Conferences during this period, inasmuch as the Churches and Missions constituting them reverted to the care of the Society. It is necessary to examine the causes of this retrogression, which brought once more on the mother Church the sustenance of children who were ' of age ' and had set up house for themselves.

Foremost amongst these causes, and irresistible in its compulsion, was the condition of *financial necessity* to which the West Indian Circuits were reduced ; the Church, labouring at its inception and after the relief afforded it by the parent Society, under the load of £120,000 of debt resting upon its properties, became practically bankrupt on its current account. In the speech above cited, Sargeant refers with satisfaction to the activity of West Indian Methodism in chapel building and the extension of Circuit premises during the early years of the

Conference period. Unhappily, the £6,000 raised toward these objects formed by no means the total expenditure ; money was freely borrowed from local lenders, often at high interest, and new burdens fell on the limited Society funds, from which they could not shake themselves free. The increased power conferred on Native administration in the West Indies, and the withdrawal of the prudent restraints the Missionary Committee had imposed on local spendings, did not make for economy. Every now and then came a hurricane or earthquake to devastate Church property, necessitating the rebuilding of perhaps half the chapels, schools, and manses in this island or that. Apart from such contingencies, the normal expenditure required by the rapid deterioration of woodwork in the West Indian climate entailed an expenditure on current account which the poorer congregations could with difficulty meet. The accumulation of debt from these combined causes was inevitable. The expensiveness of its plant threatened to strangle a Church subsisting in chronic poverty.

Add to this the maintenance of the ministry, now precarious as it had not been when Mission House grants were forthcoming to supplement District resources. Each Circuit was expected to shoulder its own burdens, whereas in the most competent Districts Circuit self-support hitherto had been the exception. District Sustentation Funds were started, but they proved inadequate. Competent Circuit Stewards were rare ; the men put into office often lacked business habits and mastery of accounts. The English Ministers found themselves frequently in humiliating straits, obliged to collect their own stipends and virtually to play the beggar's part. Again and again, through the poverty of Church members or the apathy of Class-leaders, expected contributions were not forthcoming ; Circuit accounts fell into arrears ; where no private means were available, the Missionary's plight was distressing indeed. With his contracted circle of ideas and low level of subsistence, the average negro Methodist had little conception of the necessities requisite for a European family under the same sun. He appreciated his English pastor's preaching and recognized the superiority of his ministry ; but he failed to realize, even when he was able to meet, the cost in ' carnal things ' of the ' spiritual things ' he had learnt to value. Hence the depletion in the English staff which speedily followed the declaration of West

Indian self-support. There were men who nobly stayed, in the resolve to do their best by the Missionary Churches and to make the new régime succeed, even though their judgement had been against its introduction ; but most of the older Missionaries—especially those with family claims upon them—were compelled by sheer physical necessity to migrate to England. Such losses could not be repaired.

Having no further claim for supplies upon the British Connexion, the new Conferences must rear, or engage from elsewhere, their own ministry. Eligible Native candidates were of necessity scarce while education remained in so backward a state ; on the other hand, the town congregations in particular needed for their pulpits men of some mental calibre and acquirement. West Indian Methodism must still seek for its ministry from England ; it found these mostly in the list of home candidates approved by the Circuits who for one reason or another had failed to recommend themselves to the British Conference. Not a few of the young men thus secured proved valuable helpers and Missionaries by vocation ; but most of them came to their work untrained, and some, as might be expected, failed under trial.

The dangers arising in matters of counsel and discipline from the loss of men of experience in the ministry, and the preponderance of the young and untried, were aggravated by the smallness of the Ecclesiastical Courts constituted under the scheme of 1883. A Missionary who laboured in this field for some years before and after the change of system says of the new order :

It gave to a very few men powers which should be possessed by a much larger number. Think of a ' District Synod ' that had only *two* ordained English Ministers in it ! That was the case of Antigua, when St. Kitts had been made the head of a new District.<sup>1</sup> Think of a ' Conference ' of not more than twenty Ministers ! That was so with the Eastern section. Eleven votes were sufficient to receive a candidate into the ministry, or to turn a man out of the ministry.<sup>2</sup> To commit all the powers of the Methodist Conference to so small a number of men was fatal to the success of the plan.

The same witness points to the costliness, both in time and money, of the West Indian Conferences as contributing to their failure.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 454 in respect to the reasons for creating these diminutive Districts. On the abandonment of the provincial Conference the larger Districts were, to a great extent, reconstituted.

<sup>2</sup> These judgements were *final*, admitting of no appeal to the British Conference.



I was ordained [he says] at the first Eastern Conference, held in Barbados, to which I had to travel 400 miles each way. I was elected to the next in Antigua, and to the third in Georgetown, Demerara. To the last-named I travelled 1,100 miles each way, spending a fortnight on the double journey, to attend a Conference of not more than twenty Ministers, lasting about one week. My travelling expenses to the Demerara Conference, most strictly calculated, amounted to £13 15s.; there were at least three other delegates whose travelling cost more than that. To meet the Conference expenses some Circuits in the Leeward Isles were assessed to nearly half their annual income!

To the charges involved by the meeting of the annual Conferences<sup>1</sup> and of the Synods were added those of the Triennial General Conference, which, while the attendance was smaller, gathered its membership from the entire West Indian area. For a Church the bulk of whose members were excessively poor and suffered from the disabilities inflicted by centuries of bondage, for whom the maintenance of their local ministry and Church fabrics was more than sufficient, a Connexional system like this was financially unworkable. From the year 1894 the General West Indian Conference ceased to be held; its meetings were a luxury the Church could not afford.\*

But the financial troubles which beset the new Conferences came to a head first in the West, in connexion with the administration of Thomas B. Butcher, who was Chairman of the Jamaica District before the separation and of the First Jamaica District afterwards. In the former capacity he had been responsible financially to the Missionary Committee in London; in the latter he was servant of the West West Indian Conference, which elected him its Vice-President. He appears, however, to have continued after the change to draw directly upon the Mission House and to have received and disbursed considerable sums of money between the years 1884 and 1889, which were debited in London to the West West Indian Conference, but of which his fellow officers of the latter body seem to have been unaware. So 'the Butcher debts' originated, which weighed heavily upon the Western Conference until the end. Butcher's accounts became further entangled through his Governorship

<sup>1</sup> The Western Conference, which embraced outside of Jamaica only the adjacent Haiti and Santo Domingo, with their handful of men, had a comparatively light burden to carry on this account; its area was compact, while that of its neighbour was straggling in the extreme.

\* The meeting of 1897 fell through in consequence of the refusal of the Western Conference to send the representatives allotted to it by the Constitution.

of the York Castle High School in 1887-88.<sup>1</sup> Not till the year last-named did the irregularity of his business methods come to light. Both at Bishopsgate and in Jamaica he enjoyed so much respect—a respect on other grounds well deserved—that his proceedings had hitherto passed unquestioned. All the parties concerned seem to have been at fault in this financial muddle. The case was tried after Butcher's return to England in 1889, and he was exonerated from moral blame; but his wrong-headedness and incompetence for the handling of public finances were patent.

The two Jamaica High Schools of York Castle and the Barbican, established under the Missionary Committee's rule,<sup>2</sup> were another financial entanglement. In both cases the foundation expenses had only been partially met; and though generally well attended, the schools had not always paid their way. The Barbican premises were damaged by hurricane, and further loans were contracted to meet the cost of repairs. The situation of York Castle was deplorable, except in point of health. Instead of working themselves clear, these properties became more and more clogged with debt; every attempt to relieve them failed. In the end both schools were closed—a result lowering to the prestige of Methodism in Jamaica and impairing its strength. By this time public education in the island had much advanced. Government High Schools, both for boys and girls, had come into existence, competing with our institutions; the need Methodism sought to supply was no longer extreme. Provision was subsequently made at Kingston to continue the training of Native Ministers formerly conducted at York Castle.

In 1897 the Eastern Conference sent up a cry of distress, addressing to the Missionary Committee a memorial on the desperate condition to which it was reduced, after twelve years of resolute endeavour to fulfil its commission. This melancholy document recalls the fact that most of those best able to judge had regarded the founding of the Conferences as premature; on all hands it was now admitted that 'the constitution had broken down, both in Circuit and Conference administration.

<sup>1</sup> He was then Chairman of the St. Ann's (Third Jamaica) District.

<sup>2</sup> And under George Sargeant's chairmanship, who was primarily responsible (at least in the case of York Castle) for the heavy debt with which the property was saddled at the outset. He and others formed a too sanguine estimate of the prospects of these establishments.

From the beginning the system of lay representation had been a failure.' Every effort had been made to induce the attendance of representative laymen, 'but so far as the Eastern Conference is concerned such efforts have been fruitless.'<sup>1</sup> The Conference had failed in raising a Native ministry; 'it has been impossible to secure a sufficient number of men qualified by gifts and education.' The financial position was fast becoming untenable:

During the last ten years £1,750 in Government grants have been withdrawn; the withdrawal of those remaining is threatened.

The Missionary Committee's grants toward higher education had ceased, to the amount of £950 per annum. The ordinary income of the Circuits had fallen by £816 in the last eleven years. The assessments laid on the Circuits to maintain Connexional Funds

have been a source of irritation and dissatisfaction; they have crippled the work of God, and impoverished the Ministers, who have been compelled to pay these charges largely out of their own pockets.

Ministers' stipends had been, in various degrees, lowered through the whole Church, and many of them were in painful straits. The Trust liabilities amount to £19,000, involving yearly interest-charges of £940. The decay of the sugar industry—in several islands a total collapse—makes the outlook for the future 'most serious and disheartening.'<sup>2</sup> . . . In none of the islands are the people obtaining sufficient work; . . . in the majority of cases the total wages for the month, 'of common labourers, 'are not more than 5s.'

Unless something can be done to cheapen the present expensive system of Church government, and unless aid be given from the parent Missionary Society, many of the Stations will have to be abandoned. The present ministerial staff is inadequate . . . three of the Ministers on the ground are returning to England at the close of the Conference, and the Conference is not prepared to supply their places. We have done our best [the memorialists declare] to work efficiently, economically, and loyally the system you imposed upon us in 1885;

<sup>1</sup> The group of Barbados laymen who had been eager in the assertion of lay rights had failed to put in an appearance at Conference.

<sup>2</sup> In St. Vincent, for example, during the ten years from 1886 to 1896 (when the exportation of bounty-fed beet-sugar from Central Europe hugely increased), the sugar-exports fell in value from £135,465 to £21,582, the total value of the island's exports declining by two-thirds.

but the experiment has failed! The Conference 'asks for a reconsideration of our position' and the granting of 'an annual subsidy in aid of our work.' It requests that a Deputation be sent from the Mission House to inquire into the state of things, and that its Vice-President be allowed to visit England to represent the case before the Missionary Committee. A tragic emphasis was given to the above memorial by the discovery in the course of the following year of defalcations on the part of the Vice-President who signed it, which resulted in his deposition from the ministry. Impecuniosity had been his temptation.

The Western Conference of 1898 addressed a similar appeal to the mother Church, in which it is said :

The struggle to maintain our work and to extend it, in the manner we have done during the last twelve years, has been intense<sup>1</sup>; and a sense of weariness in the strife has settled upon the minds alike of the Ministers and the membership. So far we stand alone, not unpitied, but unhelped, in this day of our calamity. . . . We know that our God will not forsake us, and that the Methodist Churches will not refuse to succour us.

The Missionary Committee responded to the above appeals by appointing a Deputation to visit the West Indian Churches in the winter of 1898-99 and to study and advise upon their condition, consisting of the Rev. William R. Winston, former Missionary to Ceylon and Burma, and Major John Smith, of the Mission House staff, an expert in missionary finance. These able Commissioners in the course of a four months' round inspected most of the West Indian Circuits; they attended the two Annual Conferences, and consulted every person within reach, inside and outside of Methodism, who could give them useful information. Their findings exhibit with painful clearness the results of the West Indian experiment in Conference-making. Had space permitted, we could wish to present the Winston-Smith report *in extenso*; much of it

<sup>1</sup> The destitution of some of the Jamaican Ministers at this period was pitiful. One of them—an English Preacher of thirty-seven years' service and Chairman of his District—was 'at times without means to procure a dinner, or even to buy a postage stamp!' Another excellent Minister writes that 'the income of his present Circuit (Falmouth) has gone down with a run'; he is 'out of pocket by more than a year's stipend.' He serves as 'Chapel Steward for each chapel in the Circuit,' and to ease its credit has 'paid the interest on trust debts (£400 at 6 per cent.), beside finding money for lighting, cleaning, &c.' out of 'Mrs. G.'s housekeeping! Since coming to Jamaica six years ago I have been obliged to spend on Circuit travelling over £90 more than I have received. . . . If there is no improvement financially we cannot live, now that our little private means are gone.'



has, however, been anticipated in previous statements ; it confirms the impression given by the memorial of the Eastern Conference. The reporters find

our own people very numerous and very loyal ; our congregations largely composed of the labouring classes—the Church membership almost exclusively so. . . . A fair supply of Local Preachers, Stewards, and Leaders, who on the whole do their work well, according to their ability ; few of them sufficiently intelligent to do more than follow the Ministers' directions. In most Circuits [the latter] have to keep the Circuit accounts ; nowhere throughout the West Indies are there laymen able or willing to share the financial responsibility. . . . The lay representation in the Eastern Conference is very small, on account of the spreading of the Circuits over so many islands and the time and expense required to attend ; in the Western Conference, which consists chiefly of the one island of Jamaica, out of seventeen representatives fourteen were present, and took an intelligent and active part in the business. . . . The greatest evil which the West Indian Churches have to deal with is the low state of social morality. . . . Many years of patient, continuous instruction are required before public opinion has a right estimate of social purity.

Amid this corrupt environment the Methodist ministry firmly upholds by its teaching and discipline the Christian moral standard. Bad housing engenders low morals. ' So long as the negro population lives in such small and miserable dwellings, without decent accommodation for family life,' chastity is hardly to be expected.

The Commissioners formed a favourable estimate of the character and ability of the West Indian ministers. But it was manifest, especially in the range of the Eastern Conference, that the Connexion could not rear its own ministry ; both York Castle and Coke College (Antigua) were closing down, and the Conferences would soon be left without means for training the few Native candidates they had. Recruits are enlisted from England by private negotiation—an undignified and undesirable arrangement. The attempts made to supplement the regular ministry by a paid lay agency seldom proved successful.

The Methodist system of supporting the ministry through Class-subscriptions, supplemented by congregational collections, was reproduced in the West Indies ; but these ordinary methods are not found sufficient. ' Special efforts ' in the shape of services of song, Christmas-trees, concerts, picnics, &c., &c., are resorted to more and more to meet the deficiency. As the pressure increases, the tendency is to go off into other highly sensational and questionable modes of raising money ; and the people would easily fall into the evil.

The stipends of Ministers in different Circuits vary greatly, the average being about £150 per annum. An amount was supplemented in the case of the more poorly paid by grants from the District Sustentation Fund or Connexional Contingent Fund, raised by assessment on the Circuits. Children's allowances are also forthcoming, as in England, from a central fund—on a more liberal scale in the Western than in the Eastern Conference. Some of the Eastern Governments contribute State grants-in-aid; the total amount of these is about £5,000, nearly half of the sum accruing in British Guiana. This was a dwindling and uncertain asset. On the whole question of Circuit income and expenditure the Commissioners conclude:

The present financial conditions make the life of a Minister in the West Indies very difficult and harassing. . . . The constant strain to keep up the finances has a damaging effect both upon Ministers and people. . . . The general testimony is that, considering their very small resources, our people contribute readily and willingly. . . . If the Minister looks well after his people, and is systematic in his arrangements, the work can be maintained by the people in a fair degree of efficiency *when times are good*.

This the times in the West Indies had not been, and were not likely to be, with the unchecked downward trend of sugar-prices and the continued importation of foreign labour. The Eastern Conference supported five Connexional funds—the *Children's Fund*, *Contingent Fund*, *Auxiliary Fund* (in aid of supernumeraries and Ministers' widows), *Chapel Relief Fund*, and *Education Fund*, the last two depending on an annual collection in the chapels, the other three on assessment of the Circuits. The Western Conference maintained the two first-named, its Contingent Fund having an adverse balance of close upon £4,000, annually increasing. Beside meeting Connexional expenses not chargeable on Circuits, the Contingent Fund served also to supplement the ministerial stipends of the poorer Circuits; moreover, in the case of Jamaica, Primary Schools were aided from this source. Its maintenance taxed severely the resources of the more prosperous Circuits, 'detering them from aggressive work.'

The condition of the trust property was the factor most endangering the financial stability of West Indian Methodism. Except in British Guiana, the majority of the chapels were solidly constructed of stone, though most of the schools and

Ministers' houses were wooden structures, liable to rapid decay.

Speaking generally [say Messrs. Winston and Smith] we found the Church fabrics well built, well situated, and in fair repair ; in a few instances they were very much out of repair and in danger of falling to pieces, with large debts still unpaid—a state of things due to the poverty of the people and the embarrassed state of the funds.

Much depended on the business ability and tact of the Minister ; it was often possible to get the necessary work done by the hands of the people themselves. Taken as a whole, Methodist properties were financially in an alarming, not to say disastrous, position. The debits on current account, under the two Conferences, amounted to £3,500 ; on capital account, the trust debts of the Eastern Conference were estimated at £15,882, of the Western at £21,573—a total sum fast approaching £40,000, half of which had been contracted since the Conferences commenced.

The total liability for trust and other debts is, approximately, £1 per head (of Church membership) in the Eastern Conference, and not far short of £2 per head in the Western—

a burden beyond the power of the Churches to remove. It was 'difficult to understand how practical and responsible men . . . could have allowed the finance to fall into such a condition.'

West Indian financiers had consoled themselves with the assumption that the value of the Church property far exceeded the amount of indebtedness upon it, forgetting that most of the plant was only valuable for Church purposes, and that 'to realize on the assets meant to destroy the work' for which they stood. The real test of solvency lay in the debtor's ability to repay the loans contracted ; judged by this criterion, West Indian Methodism was insolvent. The Commissioners do not regard the extensions of Church plant as misjudged or the Circuits as overbuilt ; had funds been adequate, their erection was fully justified.

But there has been for many years, until quite lately, a far too sanguine view of the situation and a failure to appreciate the serious nature of the obligations incurred. . . . The result is that some Circuits are staggering under the weight of debts which are, in their circumstances, enormous.

If the Missionary Committee comes to the help of the West Indian Churches, the greatest care will be needed to prevent the repetition of this evil.

The Western Conference lay under other liabilities beside those resting on the trust properties, amounting in sum to £9,629.<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Conference was clear of debt on its Connexional Funds.

Five Methodist High Schools had been set up in the islands or in British Guiana within the last twenty years or so ; it was lamentable that institutions so greatly needed by the Church, and commenced with high hopes, had proved in every instance unable to pay their way, and that no alternative lay before them but to close their doors. The plight of the York Castle Boys' School and the Barbican Girls' School of Jamaica has been already described. These establishments had contracted debts exceeding £11,000, perhaps a third of which might be realized by selling the properties.<sup>2</sup> Coke College at St. John's, Antigua, had been opened in 1888 ; fairly successful for the first five years, it accumulated debts to the amount of £3,688, and was closed in 1897. The history of the Boys' and Girls' High Schools in British Guiana, though briefer, was of the like tenor ; only in Haiti had the (Girls') Methodist High School held its own. Elsewhere the competition which had newly sprung up, supported by public funds, proved fatal to success. 'It is impossible,' say the Commissioners, 'for High Schools to pay their way in the British West Indies without considerable help from without.' Methodism did not possess in this field laymen of wealth and of enlightened views capable of appreciating the value of such institutions and contributing handsomely to their support.

'Financial Boards' had been created by the two Conferences to control the Connexional Funds and to cope with the general financial situation. This expedient had served a useful purpose in easing local burdens, as it provided a broader guarantee for the loans necessary in recent times of stress ; while it furnished advice which might be useful to Superintendents and Trustees. But the reporters see no small 'danger in this (wholesale) financing ; the business of borrowing money,'

<sup>1</sup> Most of the items included in this total have been particularized on preceding pages.

<sup>2</sup> The market for real estate in Jamaica was just then at the lowest ebb.



they say, 'had reached a point far beyond what is desirable or safe ; the sooner it comes to an end the better.'

In total, the debts of the West Indian Connexion have mounted up to £61,000, nearly two-thirds of this amount attaching to the Western Conference. The interest (averaging 6 per cent.) forms a charge beyond the power of the Church to meet out of its current income ; the arrears yearly swell the principal, and the end is plain to see ! For the present the credit of the two Conferences is good ; should that credit be impaired, they 'will be driven either to sell some of their property or to repudiate the debt,' with 'unspeakable and irreparable harm resulting in either case.'

Messrs. Winston and Smith recommend : (1) first of all, and as an immediate measure of relief, the loan by the Missionary Committee of a sum adequate to meet the amount of the trust-debts incumbent on the Conferences, to be advanced without interest and repaid by annual instalments within twenty-five years. (2) As to the assistance asked for the Jamaica High Schools, which remain open pending the Committee's decision, they 'commend the request to favourable consideration.' Unless substantial help be forthcoming, the schools must be closed and the properties disposed of without delay.<sup>1</sup> (3) The General Conference should be abolished. 'Theoretically it may have seemed necessary' to the West Indian Church system ; but the general testimony was 'that it has never fulfilled any important practical purpose, and has not been worth its cost in time and money.'<sup>2</sup> Already, indeed, this Conference 'is dead ; and it does not seem worth while to revive it.' The Missionary Committee must henceforth deal with the Eastern and Western Conference separately, their Vice-Presidents being raised to the rank of Presidents. On this understanding it would devolve on the Committee, and through it upon the British Conference, to keep the two bodies in line with each other.

The most delicate matter the Commissioners had to advise upon was the form of control the Missionary Committee should assume in consideration of the financial relief afforded to the

<sup>1</sup> This sale was not effected ; the Barbican house was made for some years a residence for the Jamaica Chairmen.

<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the testimony of some of the West West Indian Missionaries shows that the meetings of the General Conference were felt to be both of use in themselves and of profit to those attending them.

West Indian Connexion. With a view to satisfying this necessity, the Eastern Conference proposed surrendering the choice of its annual President and enlarging his administrative powers. This change it judged sufficient for the end desired; 'for there are,' Conference said, 'in our regulations and system of finance sufficient checks, if properly administered, to prevent any recurrence of debt.' The Deputation recommended acceptance of this proposal, with the suggestion added that the President thus appointed be salaried from England and set free to employ his time in Connexional oversight.<sup>1</sup> The Conference further called attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the present method of obtaining the indispensable candidates for the ministry from England—'a question,' say the Commissioners, 'of deep importance,' demanding close consideration on the part of the Missionary Committee.

The proposals of the Western Conference took a different shape. Unwilling to disturb the constitutional mode of electing the President, it suggested the appointment by the home Committee of two Ministers to form 'a Court of Control,' who should be *ex officio* members of the local Conference and of its Chapel Committee, with power to refer at their discretion any measure touching trust property with which they were not satisfied to the judgement of the Missionary Committee in London. The members of the said Court should also have the right, singly or together, on notice given, to visit any trust property they desired to inspect; and it should be their duty statedly to report to the Missionary Committee the condition of the various trusts under the jurisdiction of the Western Conference. The control thus to be allowed, as the Commissioners pointed out, was of a purely restrictive character, and did not admit of the initiation or direction of policy.

Neither of the Conferences at that time contemplated the suspension of its functions and a return to the old subordination; nor did their visitors suggest this extreme step. It was hoped that liberal temporary relief, and the exercise of a temporary and partial control by the Missionary Committee, would enable the West Indian Churches to tide over their difficulties. But the causes of trouble were deep-seated; matters grew worse instead of better, and while the Missionary Committee was

<sup>1</sup> Such provision had been made during the first seven years for the General President, under the original Conference scheme.

considering the report its representatives laid before it, and the drastic measures it was necessary to take, the crisis came to its height. At their meetings early in 1903<sup>1</sup> the two Conferences unitedly declared their inability to carry on the work of Methodism in their several provinces any further, formally resigning the commissions given them nineteen years earlier, and requesting the Missionary Committee to resume charge of the Districts and Societies over which it formerly exercised jurisdiction. Most reluctantly the Missionary Society accepted this surrender, and the British Conference of that year, on the motion of Dr. Rigg, Treasurer of the Missionary Society, adopted a series of resolutions to this effect, of which the following is the decisive sentence :

That the Districts now forming the said West Indian Conference be taken over again by the Yearly Conference (British), and placed, from January 1, 1904, under the charge of the Committee of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, in the same way as all other Missionary Districts of the Yearly Conference.

In this retransference the number of Districts as constituted under the local Conferences was reduced, by reuniting the four Jamaica Districts in one as originally constituted, while Haiti and Santo Domingo made up another District, British Guiana retaining its separate character, and the Lesser Antilles forming a couple of Districts, subsequently known as 'The Leeward Islands' and 'Barbados and Trinidad'—a total of five ; or *seven*, including the Bahamas and Honduras, which had remained all the while in the British Connexion.

With its existing income pledged to the support of the work in other fields, the Missionary Society had no funds available to meet the burden thrown upon it by the breakdown of the West Indian Conferences. After 'careful inquiry into the financial position of the West Indian Churches' and a 'professional investigation' of their accounts, the debts were ascertained to be

<sup>1</sup> In 1901 the British Conference consented to the alteration in the West Indian constitution caused by the disappearance of the 'General Conference,' which had not met since 1894. The failure of the Western Conference to send its moiety of representatives prevented the meeting of the General Conference in 1897. Notwithstanding this irregularity, the British Conference of 1897 pronounced Thomas M. Geddes, who had been duly nominated by the General Conference of 1894, to be 'President' for three years from 1897 onwards, and to exercise the powers and functions of this office, as though the General Conference had been held. The second omission of the (General) Conference-meeting, in 1900, and the absence of any nomination to the chair, enforced the constitutional change. The two Sub-Conferences, of East and West, now became the supreme authorities.

at least £62,000, the deficit on current accounts being quite £3,000 besides. It was proposed to raise in England for this great emergency a special West Indian Fund of £30,000—

accompanied by a corresponding appeal in the West Indies. Without such an appeal, successfully made, the Conference could not hope to save the historic Methodism of the West Indies.

Very unwelcome was this necessity to the supporters of the Missionary Society. It was not found practicable to make the proposed collection until the year 1905-06. The response to the appeal was far from being eager, but it was loyal and generous; the West Indian Districts exerted themselves strenuously to do their part, and in the end the handsome sum of £30,000 was contributed for the object by the British Connexion. The money thus gathered was laid out step by step in removing the crushing load, while effectual security was taken against the recurrence of debt. The fund was administered upon a 'pound for pound' plan, its several instalments being advanced successively as the corresponding amounts were raised in the West Indies to meet them. In this way £60,000 was raised, and the weight of the burden lifted off. The balance of the debts have subsequently been liquidated by a grant from the Centenary Fund,<sup>1</sup> and through the substantial increase in the Annual Missionary Fund realized of late years.

Perhaps the greatest boon conferred on the West Indian Churches through their coming again under the care of the Missionary Society has been the renewed supply of young Ministers from the British Conference. Since 1904 the stream of reinforcements, arrested for nineteen years, has recommenced, bringing a quickened life and energy to the Churches. Out of the 96 Ministers found in the five Districts in 1913-14 (excluding the Bahamas and Honduras), 46 have been furnished by the Missionary Committee within the last ten years; 36 were candidates of Native origin; only 16 remained of those procured from England by the West Indian Conferences on their own account.

<sup>1</sup> Three separate contributions to the Centenary Fund had been earmarked by donors for this purpose.



## XV

### THE TWO DISSIDENT DISTRICTS

The Bahamas—George Lester—Appeal for Lay Preachers—Queen's College—Centenary of Methodist Church in Bahamas—Honduras an Enclave—A Variety of Interests—A Starved Mission—Notable Missionaries—The Position in 1913.

THE Bahamas and Honduras Missions secured exemption from the scheme of the West Indian Conferences carried into effect in 1884 on the appeal which each of them made to the parent Missionary Society, 'Entreat me not to leave thee!' Whether either District was the gainer through standing aloof from its neighbours, and escaping their responsibilities and hazards, is questionable. Their insistence on retaining the British connexion was far from pleasing to the mother Church, which desired a complete riddance from West Indian cares and expenses, that she might spend herself upon other fields. Secession spoiled the symmetry of the new order, and detracted from its efficiency.

For other reasons, too, this detachment seemed unfortunate. The Bahamian Societies contained an exceptionally large proportion of European membership, and European laymen familiar with negro life and ways were scarce in West Indian Methodism generally. Honduras would have supplied her with a *pied-à-terre* on the Central American mainland, in which direction her best hope of expansion, with its broadening influences, lay. The lack of communication between these outliers and the rest of the province, and of the solidarity of interests proper communications tend to create, was such as time was likely to remove; and better acquaintance might be expected to correct the prejudice against West Indian alliances which actuated at this period both Bahamians and Hondurans. When these obstacles came to light it might have been worth while to spend some time and pains in overcoming them, and

drawing West Indian Methodism into unity, rather than to force on a Connexional union for the rest of the Districts, leaving out the two recalcitrants; at any rate, the grounds of their refusal, and its bearing upon the general plan, deserved to be amply considered before the decisive step of Conference establishment was taken. It was hoped that the dissenters would come in afterwards of their own accord, repenting of their stand-offishness, when the benefits resulting to their neighbours from independence became manifest and the setting-up of the local Conference justified itself by success. Unhappily, events took the opposite course; instead of regretting their timidity, the Bahamian and Honduran Methodists had occasion to congratulate themselves on their caution in declining to be linked to a Church prematurely pushed into self-rule. At the time their obstinacy was most unwelcome in England; and though the Missionary Society would not cut them adrift, it did not lavish attention upon them, nor treat them altogether generously during the years of West Indian independence.

On the retirement of the gentle Francis Moon, Thomas Raspass, who had served in regions so far remote as West Africa and Western Australia, filled the chair of the BAHAMAS District for several years. When he in his turn 'sat down,' in 1891, the British Conference did a special kindness to the Bahamians by lending George Lester for five years as their Bishop. A man of superior rank in the home ministry—genial, cultivated, dignified, enterprising, ready alike with tongue and pen—Lester gave himself with enthusiasm to his new sphere. He did much by his communications to the missionary press,<sup>1</sup> as well as by his labours on the field, to invigorate the Methodism of these islands, and to win for them a worthier place in the regard of the Church. Lester sought out the distant and neglected parts of his far-spread diocese, with an eye for every feature of human and religious interest, or commercial value, or geographical importance. Of *Andros*, which flanks the coast of Florida to the south-east, he writes in 1892: 'It is with much satisfaction that I have placed . . .

<sup>1</sup> Note especially Lester's brightly written and instructive work entitled *In Sunny Isles*, published by the Methodist Book-Room in 1897, which furnishes a very readable account not only of Bahamian life and manners, but also of Cuba and its religious outlook—the gravest problem at the present time for the evangelization of the archipelago.

an evangelist upon this remote island, which is 'difficult of access' but 'the largest of the Bahamian group.' He speaks of its valuable and extensive woods, its fertile soil but partially cultivated,<sup>1</sup> its comparative proximity to great markets, and the probability that in spite of its lack of good harbours Andros in the future will become a region of importance. At present the field was completely open to the Methodist Preacher, and the people friendly and unsophisticated. Referring to this and similar openings in his District, Lester writes in 1893 :

If two or three efficient young Local Preachers in England would volunteer for work as lay evangelists, content with such remuneration as our straitened means admit of, they would find in the Bahamas a good sphere for usefulness and the prospect of almost immediate success. Here there are no difficulties of language to struggle with ; even on new stations the people are sufficiently acquainted with the order of Christian worship to be able to enter at once upon our public services.

In *Inagua*, at the extreme south of the group, he found another inviting field, and one with peculiar claims on the Methodist Church, as having been successfully occupied in its more flourishing days. To the grief of the people, Inagua was abandoned in its poverty through the call for missionary retrenchment. Lester, and subsequently Northcroft, his helper, came across old Inaguans who showed them faded Methodist tickets of membership treasured through the years of desertion. Others settled on the island had enjoyed the Church's fellowship in distant parts of the West Indies, and were eager to be associated with it in their new home. Anglicanism was at work here, but in an anti-evangelical, persecuting spirit, which repelled Methodist worshippers and left men's souls unsaved. Clearly the Mission had a work to do in this spot for God, and a duty to fulfil. Inagua must be reoccupied. In earlier times the salt-deposits formed in the ponds along the shore were the source of wealth. When Inagua salt was undersold the island ceased to thrive. The capital, Matthew Town, possessed, however, an excellent harbour athwart the track of the American steamers sailing now in numbers to Haiti and Central America, supplying also a convenient base for whale-fishing operations. Hence a new population was gathering at this

<sup>1</sup> The sisal hemp, which has become a leading export of the Bahamas, is now extensively grown in Andros.

centre which needed the care of Methodism, and contained elements favourable to its replantation. Lester took measures toward this end.<sup>1</sup>

The Chairman's greatest success was won at Key West, on the Florida shore. The character of this unique settlement, and the beginnings of Methodist work there, have been already sketched; George Lester fixed his attention upon Key West, and made its development a chief interest of his Synod. He posted at the new station (passing under the title of 'The Gulf of Mexico Mission') an able young Missioner (James Alfred Archer), to whom he gave frequent personal assistance. Key West has reinforced Bahamian Methodism and corrected its extreme insularity. This is now (1918) in point of membership the third Circuit of the District; in enterprise it holds a still higher place. In Lester's time Key West received a great stimulus to its growth through the Spanish-American War of 1895, when this post furnished the basis for the naval and military operations of the United States forces against Cuba.<sup>2</sup>

Through the Cuban immigrants it was hoped to gain access to the people of Cuba itself, on the evangelization of which Lester was intent, now that religious liberty was proclaimed here and this mighty island was at last open to messengers of the Gospel. Often had the Methodist Preacher gazed wistfully across the channel from the shores of the Bahamas to that vast preserve of Popery; the day for his admission was drawing near, and Key West might furnish a bridge of approach.

The appeal quoted on the opposite page, which Lester made to young lay Preachers at home for help in the Bahamian Mission, appears to have borne some fruit; he was able to employ in the islands several helpers of this nature, who figure in the *Minutes* as 'Missionary Assistants.' In 1893 and 1894, moreover, George James Henry Northcroft<sup>3</sup>—a vigorous and lively young man, with literary gifts resembling those of his Chairman, and a general favourite—laboured as District Missionary,

<sup>1</sup> Inagua and the neighbouring southern Bahamas have not hitherto fulfilled Lester's expectations. There are found here, up to the present date, but a score or two of Methodist members, insufficient for the maintenance amongst them of a resident Minister, and depending on occasional pastoral visits from a distance.

<sup>2</sup> Cuba, shamefully misgoverned by Spain, had been in a state of revolutionary ferment for many years before 1895, and large numbers of political refugees and fugitive slaves had fled to Key West and the adjacent coasts.

<sup>3</sup> Northcroft returned home in 1902, and shortly afterwards retired from the ministry. He ran uncommonly well in his early Bahama years, but something arose to hinder.



carrying out the plans of his chief in the way of revisiting old stations and planting the Mission in neglected islands. Though blessing rested on these efforts, and the enterprise of the Church was renewed under Lester's administration, the Church membership upon the whole was but moderately increased<sup>1</sup>—from 3,455 to 3,578. The Bahamas did not escape the general influences obstructing and depressing evangelical activities in the West Indies toward the close of the century.

The town of *Nassau*, the capital of the islands both politically and commercially, and the birthplace of Methodism in the District, underwent at this epoch a change unfavourable to the Church's work—it became a fashionable American winter resort. A Yankee speculator built here a huge hotel, and ran a line of steamers from New York to fill it. The genial, equable warmth of the climate attracted invalids suffering from the inclement winters of the north-eastern mainland. Nassau learned to cater for the new class of visitors and residents, whose tastes were often of a far from elevating nature. Under this influx Sabbath-keeping declined, and religious interests came to be at a discount. The stream of health and pleasure-seekers brought increased wealth and population to Nassau, raising the little colonial and trading town to the level of a stylish watering-place, where luxury and dissipation grew rankly. A new task and a fresh struggle began for Methodism, in which up to the present time the Church has grievously suffered. Its membership is a third less in number than it was a generation ago.

The character of the ordinary islanders differs widely from that of the American frequenters of Nassau. Scattered as they are on lonely islets amid tempestuous seas, and cut off from human intercourse, they have grown insular to an excessive degree. They are shy, self-contained folk, with minds occupied by few and firmly held ideas, religiously impressible, but superstitious, simple and primitive in their habits, strong in their attachments, and slow to move, hearty and steady in friendship when once their confidence is won. Their seafaring pursuits take the men regularly from home for the greater part of the year. During the three hurricane months of late

<sup>1</sup> At the present date (1918) it has diminished to 3,082, distributed in nine Circuits. Nassau and Harbour Island Circuits exhibit a falling-off during the last twenty years.

summer and early autumn, when boats are laid up from the sponge-fishing, inter-island missionary work is precarious. Isolation has commonly limited the choice of the Natives in marriage on the several islands to a narrow circle of families, whose blood has been mingled through successive generations. The circumstance has caused race deterioration and the prevalence of congenital diseases, which affects similarly the islands occupied both by black and white inhabitants, and raises a problem of eugenics urgently demanding attention from all interested in the welfare of the Bahamians. The separation of the Methodists of this group from their brethren of other islands is the more regrettable on this account. It is vital to the future of the islanders that they should mix with West Indian life at large, and cultivate intercourse in the way of trade and society with the Americans of the mainland, white and black.<sup>1</sup> Key West already supplies a stepping-stone to intercommunion.

Queen's College, planted in Nassau, formed a conspicuous and growing element in the life of Bahamian Methodism at this time. First designed, seemingly, by Henry Bleby, the project succeeded when Methodist attempts at higher education in other quarters failed. Its success was due not only to wise management, but perhaps chiefly to the better social spirit and kindlier feeling between the races diffused in these islands, and to the larger hold upon the well-to-do classes enjoyed by the Methodist Church. Whatever the causes, the result has been fortunate. A degree of culture has been infused into the Bahamian laity of both colours which has given improved lay service and increased stability to our Church in the islands; young men have been retained who would otherwise, in all probability, have found their mental and spiritual homes elsewhere. Methodism has trained for a generation past a large proportion of the representative public men and civil servants of the Bahamas, who have done honour to the mother that reared them.

Queen's College had been commenced as a High School some years earlier; but the establishment was raised to collegiate title and to permanent efficiency under the headship

<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that while, in the Bahamas, white and black are on better terms than in most other countries, and political jealousy is slight, there is little mixture of blood between them; they live at a respectable distance, and have arrived at a fairly stable, if not altogether satisfactory, *modus vivendi*.

of Henry Rivers, 'a scholar and a saint,' who came out from England to occupy this post in 1874. The administration of Rivers, and the influence he acquired, earned for Queen's College the reputation it has since retained, making it a commanding centre of education for these islands.<sup>1</sup> From the days of Mr. and Mrs. Turton Methodism in the Bahamas has associated itself with educational effort and the mental improvement of the people. Beside the Connexional College in Nassau, at the general request a private School of superior character was commenced in Governor's Harbour by a talented Minister's wife (Mrs. John Keddie), which has continued to run a useful course, proving a welcome auxiliary to the Church.

By the year 1900 the Centenary of Methodism in the Bahamas came round. The memory of its beginning every one desired to recall. The Synod decided to make a festival of the occasion, and drew up in connexion with it a plan for

(1) Extinguishing the debts on Methodist property throughout the islands—a burden irksome enough, though by no means so crushing as that which rested on other West Indian Districts.

(2) For repairing and improving Connexional premises where, as in many instances, such outlay was required.

(3) For building the new churches, schools, and manses needed in the islands, and

(4) For supplying the District Sustentation Fund with working capital.

Ten thousand pounds was the sum aimed at for these objects; the attainment fell a little short of this figure. The Missionary Committee was asked to send out some leading Minister from England to help the Bahamian folk in celebration; and Dr. David James Waller, a recent ex-President and long-time Secretary of the British Conference, undertook the commission. He discharged it happily and efficiently, and recorded his impressions at length in the *Missionary Notices* for the year 1901.<sup>2</sup>

From 1897, when George Lester returned home,<sup>3</sup> on into

<sup>1</sup> In his later years Mr. Rivers appears to have conducted Queen's College as a private establishment, on his own responsibility. Afterwards it reverted to the care of the Church.

<sup>2</sup> Add to Waller's narrative a valuable article by F. W. Moon in *Work and Workers* for 1900; also the six papers contributed by Northcroft to the same organ for 1901-02, under the title 'A Century's Work in the Bahamas.'

<sup>3</sup> George Lester remained on active service in England, where he was widely esteemed, till 1909, and has been since attached in a supernumerary capacity to the West London Mission.

the next century, the Bahamas District, under two successive Chairmen, enjoyed a peaceful continuity of policy. Frederick William Gostick, a careful, capable administrator, experienced in South Indian missionary work, whose health, unequal to severely tropical conditions, revived in the mild warmth of the Bahamas, was in charge from 1897 to 1905. William H. F. Bleby, one of the three missionary sons of the redoubtable Henry Bleby, himself formerly Chairman of this District, presided efficiently from the latter date to 1916. Frederick Gostick was nephew of the well-known John Gostick, of Indian fame; if not equal to his uncle in eminence, he showed himself a man of the same fine temper and Methodist zeal.<sup>1</sup> William Bleby, who has had an honoured missionary course of forty years in different parts of the West Indies, retired to spend his supernumerary days in England. The roll of Bahamas Circuits has remained scarcely changed from Lester's days; amongst the rest we find 'Andros and Bimini,' forming one Circuit, usually with a single Minister, and something over 200 members; 'Queen's College, Nassau,' sometimes with and sometimes without a Minister at its head; 'Inagua' with the legend 'One wanted' or 'Under the direction of the Chairman' attached to the name, signifying that the island is still on trial for Circuit status.

Amongst the Missionaries contemporary with the West Indian Conferences Robert Whittleton, who ministered here for twenty-one years (1873-94), travelling in most of the islands, rendered conspicuous service, winning by his steady and manful labours respect and confidence throughout the field. He is now living in retirement in the suburbs of London. In later years John Keddle (1891-1905), James Alfred Archer (1893-1903), pioneer of the Key West Mission, William J. Penberthy White (1895-1904), Franklin J. Blake (1894-1903), J. Birchenall Longden (1894-1904), and Leonard Edge (1903 to the present time), have faithfully served Christ in the Bahamas Mission, and their works follow them. Remarkable among the coloured people was Charles Stephens, who was born in slavery and rose to be a prominent Government official. Stephen's vote against his superiors in the memorable election of 1869, which brought the Anglican Establishment to an end, led to his dismissal from office. On this he was appointed a

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Gostick is still (1919) happily at work in the home Circuits.



Methodist Catechist, in which capacity he excellently served his Church to a ripe old age—‘a man of high character, and universally esteemed’ for his dignified conversation and fatherly wisdom—everybody’s friend.

The population of the Bahamas group, at present diminishing rather than increasing, is under 56,000, of whom a sixth part belong, more or less strictly, to the Wesleyan Methodist Church. There is no great room for expansion in the islands themselves, and the time and means have not yet arrived for planting the Gospel flag on Cuba—the hope on which the promoters of the Bahamian Church long ago set their eyes. The occupation of that magnificent island, which has suffered so cruelly from Spanish mismanagement and Romanist perversions, would link up the work in the Bahamas to that in Haiti and Jamaica.

While the Bahamians, who are of the same blend of white and black as other West Indians, held aloof from their kindred, setting their faces toward England, the Methodist folk of HONDURAS,<sup>1</sup> in taking the like position, may allege stronger grounds of distinction—in point of race as well as of environment and occupation. British Honduras is an enclave of Central America, overshadowed by the Spanish-Indian Republics. A different atmosphere prevailed here from that breathed in the West Indies proper, and quite other aims presented themselves to the Missions planted on this soil. The Honduras District called for developments extending into Spanish territory, where the aboriginal Indian elements were powerful and heathenism continued to be rife; where also, with increasingly liberalized political institutions and the discrediting of the Roman Catholic system, unprecedented opportunities offered themselves to Methodism. From Central America the way lies open to Southern America, ‘the coming continent,’ as it is often styled, in which vast undeveloped resources, both material and spiritual, await men knowing how to utilize them.

The band of Missionaries on the field in 1884 were eager to ‘take occasion by the hand,’ had only adequate resources and leadership been supplied them. From the outset this Mission was deplorably undermanned. Its casualties were heavy, its climatic and social conditions deterrent; the Missionaries

<sup>1</sup> Except those of the Ruatan Circuit, descendants of British island Negroes

were half their proper number ; the lay schoolmasters, indispensable auxiliaries to their work, could not be obtained. Hopeful invitations from across the Spanish borders were again and again declined ; new stations were occupied and then deserted through the death or invaliding of the staff and the inability of the home Committee to replace them. Even more than heretofore, the history of the Honduras District during its later years becomes a record of chances let slip, of fields of fair promise unentered. Especially on the southern side of the colony, along the lines of railroads crossing Spanish Honduras and Guatemala toward the Pacific, openings for missionary effort multiplied in the closing decades of last century, at the time when the West Indian Churches were thrown on their own resources, while Honduras continued under British direction. The set time seemed to have come to strike a powerful blow for Christ in Central America. This was precisely the occasion to strengthen Honduras Methodism and give it a forward impulse ; but alas, at this juncture arose the Missionary Controversy of 1888-90, lowering the Society's income by many thousands of pounds and arresting all plans for advance.

From the first the Honduras Mission was *starved*. It has stood in the background of Methodist attention and care. Seldom has Central America been heard of on the public platform or in the prayer-meeting ; with rare exceptions, this region lies outside the range of missionary imagination. Yet nowhere in the world is there a sorer 'famine of the Word of God' ; nowhere is richer material to be found lying to the hand of the preacher and reformer ; and nowhere have more patent, or perhaps more pregnant, opportunities been missed than those which have come in the way of British Methodism in these countries during the two generations past. For some reason Spanish America has been 'passed by on the other side' by enthusiasts for humanity and missionary travellers and adventurers. It is high time that the neglect should be redressed.

William Tyson, a true world Missionary, who commenced his course in Jamaica so long ago as 1846, and gave many years subsequently to the South African Conference, beside 'travelling' for a season very acceptably in English Circuits, filled the chair of the Honduras District, after Atkin's withdrawal, for the space of five years. Though not versed in

Spanish, Tyson was an experienced, cultivated, and discerning Minister, of delightful temper and meekness of wisdom, who loved the people of God wherever he met them, and knew how to hold the balance amidst conflicting interests—'good old Mr. Tyson,' as a young Honduran Preacher described him, fondly recalling his administration amid the troubles of later days. Under Tyson's oversight several of the new fields marked out by his predecessors Peters and Atkin were successfully entered, and the Church membership of the District was enlarged by about 500 upon its earlier total of 1,200. In Spanish Honduras the San Pedro del Sula Circuit was formed by the labours of Owen Jones<sup>1</sup> and Henry W. Bunting in turn, who won the friendship of the people and laid a sound foundation for the future. The first named returned to England through health-failure in 1891; Bunting, an exceptionally talented and high-spirited young man, succumbed in the following year, while still in his probation, to an epidemic of yellow fever, his fearless devotion to his fellow victims earning for him the reputation of a martyr. For eight years thereafter this station was left vacant; but for the faithful and clever Methodist schoolmaster left behind the ground gained for the Gospel at San Pedro must have been lost.

Tyson's removal in 1891 was followed by a period of discontent and unrest which delayed the progress of Methodism at a hopeful time. With its distracting variety of work, carried on under physically enervating conditions, and its mere handful of workers, the Honduras District eminently required a strong and trusted Chairman. William Tyson left behind him a group of junior Ministers, in some instances of remarkable talent and activity, but who did not form a well-matched team, and too young for command. A succession of short-lived appointments of outsiders to the District Chair ensued, under whose rule disputes and complaints to head quarters were chronic. Upon these wranglings it is not necessary nor useful to dwell.<sup>2</sup> The Missionaries were preoccupied by personal

<sup>1</sup> Owen Jones, a man of Welsh extraction, after being at the Belize High School, was chosen to commence the San Pedro Mission. On his return from Honduras he entered English Circuit work, and has pursued his labours vigorously and usefully to the present hour (1919).

<sup>2</sup> The young men concerned were not free from blame in this contention; more than one of them seem to have been disputatious and over-critical. In the case of one of these presiding officers, whose return to the field was petitioned against from Belize, the Chairman's *wife* was the obnoxious party; his failure in duty was popularly taxed upon her.

differences, and our best people in the Circuits were disheartened. Add to this that towards the end of the decade a scandal disturbed the Toledo Circuit affecting the character of its Minister, a gifted and attractive young man, the question of whose innocence or guilt sharply divided the Church. The case was never formally tried. Ultimately the accused, returning to England, resigned the ministry; he left a trail of mystery in Honduras, and no little division of feeling both amongst his brethren and the laity.

Joseph B. Nowell<sup>1</sup> (1888-94) was one of the choicest Missionaries ever sent to this part of the world—a man of intellectual strength, unwearied toil, and gentle piety, who was 'dearly beloved and longed for' when, after six years' work in the District, chiefly among the Carib people, his return to England became necessary; he died at home in 1915. An excellent man came to the front in the later nineties in the person of Hezekiah McField, a coloured schoolmaster of ability and evangelical ardour, who entered the ministry and for many years proved singularly effective as itinerant Preacher to the up-country woodmen—a class difficult to reach with the message of the Gospel. Henry Tregoning, who for reasons of health rejoined the British ministry in 1899, and, being Superintendent of the Ruatan Circuit, was out of the way of the disputes raging on the mainland during the later nineties, acquitted himself as a disciplinarian and excellent Circuit manager. Tregoning describes the Ruatan Mission as having a Quarterly Meeting fully organized and effective in its various departments; the people 'are proud of their Circuit, and have reason to be so. . . . All Circuit and School expenditure has been met, and a balance of £250 handed over' to aid the District elsewhere. Over £700 in addition has been raised on the spot for purposes of chapel repair and extension, this notwithstanding the monetary depression owing to Spanish rule, the exorbitant taxes and high custom duties, and the depreciated silver currency. The enforcement of conscription by the Spanish Honduras Government, which was contrary to treaty, disturbed Methodist work through the Circuit by scattering the young men. Tregoning speaks of the Bay Islanders as 'a fine

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Nowell was son of the venerable Minister John Nowell, who predeceased him by only four years, and brother to the well-known painter, Arthur T. Nowell, R.A.



race, both intellectually and physically.' The old Belize and Ruatan Circuits still supplied the backbone of the District.

The Mission made some advance despite its hindrances and setbacks—amongst which general financial troubles were included—during the disturbed period between Tyson's and Lord's reign, the Church membership increasing by over 150 on the whole; it declined at Belize and San Pedro del Sula, but advanced in other Circuits.

Not till 1900, when the Chair was filled by James William Lord, who had spent his early years (1881-89) labouring assiduously in Honduras and acquiring a command of Spanish, and subsequently for some years had ministered in Madrid (1890-94), did the District settle down again. Lord's former service in the Mission had left a good savour; his estimable character and modest bearing, combined with sound judgement and knowledge of the field, commanded the respect of his brethren in the Synod. With his advent the affairs of the District took a healthier turn.

Before Lord's arrival in the spring of 1900, Secretary Perkins from the Mission House paid a visit of inspection to Honduras—the first official visitation of the country—which did much to clear the air. Mr. Perkins was received with great respect by the civil authorities and with enthusiasm by the Methodists of the colony; his public addresses produced a happy impression, and the tour was in every way encouraging in its effect on the Mission. Misunderstandings were removed, and the finances of the District put on a sounder footing. For many years the grant from Bishopsgate, admittedly insufficient, had been normally supplemented by additions, under the head of 'Deficiency.' This demoralizing practice was abandoned, and the requirements of Honduras were hereafter reckoned with in the Mission House Budget. The attitude and utterances of the London representative gave renewed hope to the Honduras staff.

The new Chairman, James Lord, was encouraged to press once more on the Society the needs of Central America and the call for a bold extension of the Mission into this region of open doors. 'The brethren,' he writes, 'are full of heart . . . and resolved to make things go well.' He appeals above all for San Pedro del Sula, left unoccupied since H. W. Bunting's tragic death. Visiting himself this deserted spot, he finds the situation favourable to health, and affording a growing centre for

trade. Its Spanish-speaking population number nearly 4,000, amongst whom American and European merchants are settling including several Methodists. The 'beautiful little (Methodist) chapel,' built by the town people, has through our absence fallen into disrepair; the Preacher's house and the College are still standing—the latter turned into a hospital. The people of all classes, with whom Lord conversed freely, remember gratefully their former Ministers, Jones and Bunting, but are grieved at the subsequent neglect, which some of them regard as 'a breach of contract.' San Pedro del Sula is, in fact, the Chairman continues,

an open door into the Honduras Republic such as we have been watching and praying for for the last fifty years. We have laid a good foundation and made a deep impression in the town and district. Let a suitable man be sent, and I have no fear about his success. Holding this strategic post, and working boldly forward from it, we may easily advance to the capital . . . and soon shall have a chain of stations all the way from Puerto Cortez (the Atlantic starting-point of the railway) to Amapola, on the Pacific side. We have already occupied the villages from the Puerto to San Pedro; why should we draw back, after such an auspicious and encouraging commencement? . . . The country has no religion; the people are not Roman Catholics, but pagans. The Romanist form of religion is practically dead, as the wicked life of the priests has abolished almost even the form of worship. In San Pedro there are no strong prejudices to contend with . . . and there is perfect religious liberty. . . . We have the necessary buildings already on the spot; two good men have done splendid work there; one of them is canonized amongst the people as a martyr.

Once more the occasion had come for a forward movement in the Honduras District, calculated to carry it far into Spanish America. Opportunity and obligation concurred to dictate the advance, but leaders for a march were wanting.

James Lord brought a couple of young Missionaries with him from England in 1900; at the same time two Missionaries on the ground, still young, though of several years' experience, made their retreat in broken health. Such failures incessantly recurred. The average period of service in Honduras was ruinously brief; scarcely had men acquired the language and become at home in the country before the climate enforced a retreat to England. Though a seasoned man, Lord himself had to return home in 1911, leaving his plans for the penetration of Central America in their first stage. The simultaneous death of the two promising young Ministers, H. Donald Spencer and

Benjamin Chicken, in 1912, illustrated again the dangerous nature of the Honduras climate, and further delayed the schemes for the advancement of the Mission.

In 1913, at the close of the missionary century, we counted under 2,000 Church members in Honduras, and no more than 41 at the advanced post of San Pedro del Sula.<sup>1</sup> Nine Ministers were employed in the District, including three of Native origin. For some time it had been divided into 'British' and 'Spanish' areas. The Ruatan Circuit was counted in Spanish Honduras, to which the islands belong politically; but the people are English-speaking Negroes, and the work of Church and Schools is carried on almost wholly in English. After importunate pleading, long-continued, the Belizean Methodists in 1907 obtained their desire in the re-establishment of the High School, with a qualified Minister at its head. The success of this appointment has been conspicuous; the High School, properly supported, makes like nothing else for the rooting of the Church in the colony.

It is still the day of small things and delayed success for our Mission in this quarter; the time when 'the Word of the Lord' through its means 'shall run' across Central America 'and be glorified' has not arrived; but hope of that day's coming is not yet past.

<sup>1</sup> This Circuit in 1913 is designated 'Puerto Cortez.' It would seem as though the San Pedro Mission had gravitated eastwards from the interior, instead of pushing on west towards the Pacific.

## XVI

### EVENTS IN HAITI

A Unique History—Political Failure—Two great Chairmen—Spanish Haiti—Marriage Laws—A terrific Earthquake—Destruction of Cape Haitien—Insurrection—Abdication of President Boyer—Political Unrest—1859: a Critical Year—Spanish Rule in Santo Domingo—Mark Bird: a Great Missionary—Administration of T. R. Picot—A Year of Sickness—The Siege of Port au Prince—Haiti and the West Indian Conference—Depressing Incidents—Attitude of Romanists—A great Calamity.

SINCE Chapter VII, which traced in its closing paragraphs the first beginnings of Methodism in Haiti, we have left this island unnoticed. Its history is unique in the whole world. Having asserted its liberty in 1804, and lying outside the sphere of the Emancipation Act of 1833 (which formed a crisis for Missions in the British West Indies), the Black Republic, with its free population, remained little affected by events occurring in the islands under European dominion. The ex-slaves of Haiti were ill prepared for self-government, and the problems before them were supremely difficult. After its sanguinary revolt from the Empire of France, the new State continued to be agitated by civil convulsions. Haiti was like a volcanic country, whose soil is rent by incessant eruptions which allow nothing to grow to ripeness and no stable structure to be reared. The political instability has impressed itself on the work of the Mission in this unhappy island. Nevertheless that work has persisted; hope, dashed to the ground ever and again, revives with another turn of the revolutionary wheel; the expectation, so often belied, that the next change of government will usher in the era of peace and progress as often reasserts itself. The buoyancy of the Haitian people is undying. While suffering from the material damages due to intestine war, and from the persecution raised by the Romanist party whenever power



accrues to its hands, Methodism has always found staunch friends amongst Haitian citizens, some of them owing it benefits they cannot forget, and others seeing in the Gospel it preaches the best hope for their distracted country. Christ's command to His disciples to love and forgive, 'never despairing,' has been practised by the Missionary Society in regard to Haiti, and obedience will have its reward.

To the two heroic men who in succession occupied the chair of this Methodist District for close upon seventy years the Haitian Mission owes, under God, its continuance through so many storms. These were Mark Baker Bird and Thomas R. Picot—a pair of the most notable Missionaries in respect of courage and single-minded devotion that have adorned our annals. Each of them had served the Society elsewhere before taking up his life-work in Haiti. Bird spent his apprenticeship in Jamaica (1834–36), whence he was transferred to the adjoining island. In 1840, upon John Tindall's breakdown, he was put in charge of the District, over which he presided until 1879. His retirement was speedily followed by his death, at the age of seventy-two, in Jersey. Thomas Picot, one of three Preacher brothers, Channel Islanders by birth, was removed in 1879 from the Gold Coast of West Africa after ten years in that arduous service, and succeeded to Bird's office, which he held till 1916, thus completing nearly thirty-seven years of Chairmanship. It is unexampled that two men should between them have ruled the District for seventy-six years, and that in a country exceptionally dangerous by reason both of its climate and its ill-government, and the consequent insecurity of life. The maintenance of Methodism and its witness in the island to the present date is owing to this providential circumstance.

Before Bird's coming, however, our Haitian Church had been set upon its feet. John Tindall was the first Chairman (1835–39). He laid down the lines on which the Society has worked ever since; from the time of Tindall's ministry Methodism has had a continuous life. The fire then kindled, if sometimes flickering down to its socket, has never been extinguished. Tindall is the true father of the Haitian Mission. Brown and Catts were its pioneers at Port au Prince, Elliott Jones and Woodis at Cape Haitien; but the work these men commenced had in each case to make a new beginning after their expulsion. The Missionary Society retained Port au

Prince and Cape Henry (Haitien) on the list of its Stations as 'Vacant for the present,' and counted the declared Methodists there amongst its members. In 1826 St. Denis Bauduy, who had been for some years under instruction in England, was sent back to reoccupy the former post under the designation of Assistant Missionary. Bauduy could by himself do little more than keep the Society together, waiting for better times. The violence of persecution had now abated ; but the Government (under President Boyer) remained unfriendly. The impulse to new effort came from another quarter. The Mission had recently occupied Turk's Islands, which are situated in the extreme south of its province, near the north-east of Haiti. Theophilus Pugh, the Turk's Island Missionary, paid a visit of exploration to the neighbouring shore of Haiti, and found there a number of English-speaking settlers from North America destitute of the means of grace and desirous of Methodist ministrations. Pugh reported the case, having satisfied himself that religious liberty would be allowed in Spanish Haiti, and forwarded to the London Committee the following letter from the petitioners, dated Port au Plaat, 1832 :

We, the undersigned, principally emigrants from the U.S.A., having left our native land about eight years past in hope of bettering our temporal condition, for the grievous prejudice under which we laboured there (as coloured people) prevented us from ever aspiring to the work of men ; yet we enjoyed all the privileges of the blessed Gospel, of which we find ourselves sadly destitute in this benighted country. . . . We find among ourselves an increasing desire after these lost privileges ; and having met with the report of your truly evangelical Society, we came to the resolution a year past to solicit the Rev. Theophilus Pugh, your Missionary at Turk's Island, to try to procure a Minister of the Gospel for us. . . . The annexed list of names, numbering 24 [it is added] are those of male adults ; we have 30 females and 60 children connected with us. In addition to these we may calculate on 50 to 100 to whom the Gospel would have access in the English language.

A number of the petitioners Pugh reports as old Methodists or Baptists. He states the population of Port au Plaat as nearly 2,000, most of them Roman Catholics, speaking Creole French or Spanish. At Samana, over 150 miles eastwards, there was found a similar body of American negro emigrants, as also at Santo Domingo, the Spanish capital on the south coast. There thus appeared to be a considerable field for work in English in the eastern (Spanish) half of the island, amongst

a people favourably disposed. Having gained a footing here, the Mission would be, it was hoped, in a position to win converts among the Roman Catholic Natives of Spanish speech. Pugh reports 'the morals of the people in general' as 'awfully depraved,' a state of things he attributes to 'the licentious conduct of the priests.' He thinks that 'no country more needs a Missionary'; and supposes that the man appointed would 'meet with some hostility, but would have nothing to fear from the law.' James Horne, Pugh's successor at Turk's Islands, confirms his report, and urges the speedy occupation of Port au Plaat, suggesting the appointment of Edward Fraser to the station.

I know not [he writes] how to drop this subject; but your Missionaries sent to Haiti should be taken from the Mission Field and tried men; they should be sober and meek as well as zealous and firm. Had I but youth and a glib tongue to speak strange words . . . I would volunteer; but I am not fit—nor is my brother (Pugh) fit, though he may think so!

The London Committee were impressed with the above letters, and determined to resume their work in the island of Haiti, extending it now to the eastern part of the country, and associating with it the Turk's Islands Mission, which was remote from the rest of their work in the Bahamas. John Tindall, a young man of two years' standing, was accordingly appointed to Port au Plaat (Spanish Puerto Plata)<sup>1</sup> in 1834; next year he was made Chairman of the Haiti District, to which Turk's Island was annexed, with Cape Haitien included in his Circuit and a colleague assigned to him. St. Denis Bauduy, representing the Society at Port au Prince, was also placed under his direction.

Arriving at his post in December, 1834, Tindall found himself in a difficult plight. A house of any kind was scarcely to be had; medical aid, and many of the ordinary conveniences of life, were wanting. Six months later he reports in more cheerful strain. He has laid the foundation of a chapel at Port au Plaat on June 11; in July he travelled to Cape Haitien, and writes to the Committee thence, describing his recommencement of the Mission in this deserted place, where Methodism still counts a number of attached friends.

<sup>1</sup> Port au Plaat (or Puerto Plata) is situated in the Spanish half of Haiti, about midway along the northern coast of the island.

On the whole [he says] I am encouraged to hope. . . . With efficient help, under the blessing of God, we shall see prosperity. . . . But how can two of us, resident at Port au Plaat [a colleague has been provided him here], meet the wants of this place and one 150 miles eastwards [Samana], another 100 miles or more westwards [Cape Haitien], in such a country and such a clime as this ?

In July, 1837, Tindall set out for Santo Domingo, whither he was invited by a group of American settlers, only to find permission to preach refused him by the military commandant ; and he returned to Cape Haitien, hoping to obtain from the western President the necessary authorization.<sup>1</sup> The door, however, remained closed at the Spanish capital, and the Mission has never penetrated into Spanish Haiti far from the northern coast, nor won any number of Spanish adherents.

William T. Cardy was sent to help Tindall in 1836, and arrived before the end of that year. An active-minded, zealous, and saintly man, who laboured hard for fifteen years in this field, until he was driven to seek a cooler climate in British North America, he died at Chicago, after protracted suffering, in 1871. Soon after his arrival he wrote home, pointing to the marriage laws of the country as a grievous scandal and hindrance to religion. Along with the right of holding land, marriage with Haitien women was forbidden to white men in order to prevent their settling in Haiti and obtaining powers ; this was to be a black man's country. At the same time unmarried Whites resorted freely to the island on business errands, for a longer or shorter time, and the colonial negro women were not averse to them. Illicit connexions were frequently formed, against which, in the given state of the law, the Missionaries protested in vain. Some of the offenders would willingly have married their black companions had it been possible. Where marriage was lawful, custom made it unreasonably expensive, and Haitian society attached too little importance to the legal bond. The Roman system of indulgences encouraged vice amongst the well-to-do, who could absolve themselves by money payment from the stain of the grossest sins. Conscience was thus debased and the sense of wrong-doing almost destroyed in the popular mind ; Cardy scarcely knows how, or from what standpoint, to appeal

<sup>1</sup> At this period, since its revolt from Spain in 1822, Spanish Haiti was under the rule of the western (French-speaking) Republic ; in 1844 it broke loose from this connexion.



to the Haitians. Rome fortifies them in transgression of the commandments of God so long as they observe her ritual and pay her dues.

Bauduy by this time, after working for several years in Port au Prince, had made his way into other towns on the west. He has found at Jacmel, a flourishing little port on the south side of Haiti, a kindred spirit in the Roman priest, a liberal, Bible-loving man, who hails him as a fellow labourer and encourages his flock to attend the Methodist preaching, that they may learn better to understand and use their Scriptures. Such a priest in Haiti was indeed a water-spring in the desert !

James Horne's successor on Turk's Island was a young man named James Sharrack, whose lamented death, in August, 1836, called Tindall away from Haiti, and detained him for six months in this outlying spot. The work suffered through his absence. On his return, in the spring of 1837, Cardy was removed from Port au Plaat to Cape Haitien, where a renegade Baptist Minister, who had set up as a Preacher, was doing sad mischief. Cardy gives a gloomy account of the state of religion and the prospects of Methodism in this town. He found awaiting him a congregation of twenty or thirty people—runaway slaves most of them from Turk's Islands and other British colonies, quite illiterate, and of the lowest moral ideas. Cardy preaches twice on Sundays in English to this class of hearers, and once in French for the benefit of the Natives, beside catechizing the children in Sunday School. With regular preaching the congregations slowly improved, and the public attention was awakened. The Synod advised that Tindall should here take his station ; though north-western Haiti no longer formed a separate kingdom, Cape Haitien remained a prosperous town and a centre of influence in the island. About this date Tindall for the first time visited Samana in the opposite direction, where he had a hearty welcome and was able to organize a Society of 60 members. Before the end of 1837 Tindall changed places with Cardy at Cape Haitien, the latter returning to Port au Plaat.

In the course of the following year (1838) John Tindall made a second excursion to Samana. He returned hence to Cape Haitien by an inland route which exposed him to great hardships and adventures, described by himself at length and

with a graphic pen.<sup>1</sup> Tindall received a pleasing impression of the simplicity and heartiness of the country people, who, he believed, were in large numbers open to receive the Gospel, if suitable Preachers could be sent them ready to encounter a rough itinerancy. In 1839 Tindall's labours in Haiti came to an end; his wife was dangerously ill, while his own strength was greatly reduced. They were ordered home to England. Mrs. Tindall died upon the journey; he recovered, to spend above thirty years of great usefulness in the ministry at home, and closed his long pilgrimage in 1891, at the age of eighty-one.

The Mission House took up the work in Haiti in thorough earnest, being much encouraged by Tindall's reports. A second valuable helper, in addition to Cardy, was sent thither in William Towler, who arrived at the beginning of 1838. Bird, who had come home from Jamaica out of health but speedily recovered, on the news of Tindall's breakdown was dispatched to fill his place. The District staff was now (in 1839) four in number—Bird stationed at Cape Haitien, Bauduy at Port au Prince, Towler at Port au Plaat, and Cardy at Samana—the two latter in Spanish and the two former in French Haiti. The Methodists in the District numbered 220. Before long James T. Hartwell was added as a fifth to the missionary band. This vigorous and enterprising man rendered excellent service as a pioneer in Haiti; he laboured subsequently in the Antigua and British Guiana Districts, over both of which Hartwell presided for a while as Chairman, but was never quite so happy as amongst the people of his earliest ministry.

Saturday, May 7, 1842, forms a melancholy epoch in Haitian history. The date was marked by a terrific earthquake, which shook the whole island, overthrowing many of its most flourishing towns and spreading universal havoc. Cape Haitien was totally destroyed, and never recovered its former imposing appearance. Bird, who was living there at the time, with his family escaped destruction as if by miracle. The town, which contained about 9,000 souls, was levelled with the dust; and fire completed the work of desolation. In a few hours this gay and busy city became a huge graveyard. Bird's family took refuge on a vessel lying in the harbour, which conveyed them to Port au Prince, where they found a welcome

<sup>1</sup> See the *W. M. Magazine* for 1840, pp. 157 ff.: 'Sketches of Haiti from the Memoranda of a Traveller.'

with the Hartwells, recently domiciled there. Cape Haitien for the time was obliterated ; chapel, school, and Preacher's house—everything lay buried in the heap of ruins.

On Hartwell's arrival it was determined to push out in western Haiti, where Bauduy had been prospecting and making alliances in several directions. President Boyer was still in power at Port au Prince, his rule extending over the whole of the island ; but open persecution had ceased, and Methodism found a hearing almost everywhere. Hartwell, taking charge at Port au Prince, had set Bauduy free for wider itinerancy. At Gonaives, Jacmel, Jérémie, Cayes, Societies were formed, and several Local Preachers had been enlisted. Bauduy in 1843 took his residence in Jérémie, the most promising of the out-lying western centres ; in the same year Cardy was moved from the east to Gonaives, and a schoolmaster-preacher was found for Cayes. Soon afterwards Hartwell was stationed at Cape Haitien, which began to rise from its ruins, Bird remaining in principal charge at Port au Prince. The District membership at the beginning of this year was returned at 615 ; half of this number, however, belonged to Turk's Island, which figured for a long while in the Haiti District.

In 1843 Spanish Haiti, embracing the larger eastern half of the island, which retained much of its European character and grew more and more restive under coloured rule, broke loose from the Port au Prince government, taking advantage of the confusion caused by President Boyer's overthrow, and after a brief struggle won its independence. From this time onwards—except for a short interval of Spanish overlordship—the two independent States have occupied the island, west and east, French and Spanish-speaking ; the former Negro in population, with a mixture of European blood, but with pure Whites excluded from citizenship ; the latter peopled by descendants of the original colonists, having a majority of Spanish descent largely admixed with Negro.

During the year of insurrection Bird travelled into the interior on the occasion of his visit to Synod, fetching a wide Circuit in order to judge of the condition of the country. His report confirmed that given by John Tindall a few years earlier as to the friendliness of the farming folk, their freedom from Romanist prepossessions, and their general readiness to receive the Gospel if rightly approached. He had obtained a passport

at Port au Prince commending him as a 'Ministre de l'Evangile.' Presenting this at a certain village, and requesting the officer in charge for permission to preach and advice as to a suitable place for the purpose, he was pointed to the Catholic church. Bird deprecated giving offence to the priest by doing so, whereon the officer good-naturedly set out to inquire for some suitable vacant room in the village. He could find none, and returned to the traveller insisting that he should use the church, which 'belonged,' he said, 'not to the priest, but to the Republic and its citizens. If you will preach in our church, I will take all responsibility upon myself; for there is but one Gospel, and that Gospel ought to be preached in the church.' Bird's experiences on this tour were not all so agreeable as the above; but the incident fairly indicates the general attitude of the country population of Haiti at this juncture. Could a regiment of Methodist itinerants have been let loose upon the rural districts, they might have been captured wholesale for the Gospel. Such at least was the opinion of Mr. Bird, who writes:

At the time of which we speak the Church of Rome was indeed the National Church, but its hold was comparatively weak; no Concordat bonds existed, while every parish and cottage were open to any man who might wish to enter with the Word of God in his hand. This was indeed a golden moment for the diffusion of pure Christianity, whether by means of education, of public ministry, or otherwise. These facts, too, were fully and anxiously represented to British Christianity, but utterly in vain!<sup>1</sup>

The decay of Roman prestige in Haiti at this time, making a favourable opportunity for Methodism, was indicated by several circumstances, not the least notable of which was the failure of Dr. England, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Charleston, U.S.A., who was sent as the Pope's delegate to restore clerical discipline. The civil authorities received him with every mark of distinction, but politely declined to recognize his authority in parish affairs, and the object of the Mission was frustrated. At the same time it was marked that a Methodist camp-meeting, organized by negro immigrants, who settled in both eastern and western Haiti at this period in large numbers, was successfully held not far from Port au Prince—the only occurrence of the

<sup>1</sup> See Bird's *Haytian Independence*, pp. 238-40. The whole account of this journey, and of the author's earlier journey in January, 1843 (pp. 208-21), is deeply interesting.



kind on record in a Romanist country. Permission was refused later by the Government; that it should ever have been granted was an extraordinary thing, and significant of the temper of the people.

In December, 1842, Methodism had made its hold upon Port au Prince more secure by the erection in the city of a commodious chapel seating 400 people. Boyer's Presidency of a quarter of a century approached its end. He was a humane, judicious, and tactful man, constitutionally inclined to moderate courses. Though too much swayed by the priests, he governed the country conscientiously and made authority respected. But he was a man of narrow views, indifferent to education and prejudiced against reform. As time went on, Haitians of enterprise and liberal ideas became increasingly restive under his policy; Cayes, in the south of the country, was a hotbed of discontent. At the election of 1833 two members were returned to the Legislature for this neighbourhood named Dumesle and St. Preux, who proposed measures of reform highly displeasing to the President. He had them expelled, along with four others, by the vote of the Assembly. To this autocratic step Bird traces the troubles that ensued. The agitation for reform continued in the south, and at the next opportunity the expelled legislators were re-elected and their party strengthened. Instead of yielding to public opinion, the Executive attempted to rule by the strong hand; and the reformers, realizing their strength, raised the standard of rebellion under a General named Herrard Riviere, whose action was followed by risings in various parts of the country. Boyer now perceived that the sentiment of the country was against him; and on the Government troops suffering a defeat which endangered the capital, to prevent further bloodshed he abdicated and quitted the country. Greatly to his credit, he left behind him a full treasury, with preparations made for redeeming the paper money in circulation. Never since Boyer's retirement has French Haiti experienced such prolonged tranquillity as his management afforded.

In a few months Riviere fell from power in the attempt to suppress the rebellion of the Spanish provinces and the revolts amongst his own followers provoked by his arbitrary measures. But the brief period of his rule in Port au Prince was marked by the founding of a Wesleyan Day School for both sexes,

started at the request of the municipality created through the recent revolution. This school was carried on successfully for many years, and greatly added to the influence of the Mission.<sup>1</sup> This foundation went to fulfil Bird's dearest wish, who preached in season and out of season Christian education and moral culture as the sole remedy for Haiti's misgovernment and backwardness. The School was supported in its early days by municipal contributions and Government patronage. It underwent several changes, adding to its teaching departments a Boys' Boarding House; this enlarged capacity was very usefully maintained until the fabric was destroyed by fire.

The English Baptists a little earlier obtained a footing in French Haiti. Their Mission was vigorously established at Jacmel, where the Methodist Bauduy had realized a gratifying success; the two Churches worked hand in hand. The Baptist Chapel of Jacmel, opened in 1853, has been a rallying-point for Protestantism in the island. Shortly before this date the Wesleyan Chapel in Jérémie was opened (August, 1851), the gift of an American Methodist of the name of Folsom, who had prospered in this little town. In 1847 Hartwell resumed the work discontinued for five years at Cape Haitien, which was springing up again from its ruins. Gonaives, lying somewhat inland and to the west, was attached to this restored Circuit. Cardy retired from the Mission through failing health a little later, and Charles H. Bishop, who proved an enduring and valuable Missionary, arrived from England to take his place. Turk's Islands gravitated back to the Bahamas District in 1844, when Samuel Simons travelled there, detaching about 400 members and leaving less than 300 to the five Haiti Circuits. Later, and before the starting of the West Indian Conference, it was for a short time reattached to Haiti, and then handed over to Jamaica. The situation of this group of islands always made its administration difficult.

Haitian politics, never wanting in liveliness, took a new turn at the close of the forties, following the example of France, by whom the Black Republic has always been powerfully influenced, despite its violent revolt. President Riche, from whose early measures—especially his plans for reduction of military expense—an enlightened and useful government had been

<sup>1</sup> The school was at first conducted within the walls of the chapel; three years later (in July, 1846) it was furnished with a house of its own, built by public subscription and opened by the mayor of the city.

augured, died suddenly toward the end of 1847. In his place Faustin Soulouque was elected, a pure Black of slender education and reactionary views, commended by his popularity in the army. Soulouque's elevation was followed by a military riot causing much bloodshed in Port au Prince ; faction ran high through the country. Soulouque determined to strengthen the Executive by assuming autocratic power, and on August 26, 1849, had himself proclaimed ' Emperor of Haiti,' with no small pomp and warlike display, under the title of Faustin I. This *coup d'état* inaugurated a reign of despotism which terminated through the overthrow of the Imperialist forces in January, 1858, by the Republican General Geffrard, who restored the former constitution. Soulouque's downfall was immediately due to the attempt—made first in 1848 and disastrously repeated eight years later—to reconquer by force of arms Santo Domingo (Eastern, or Spanish, Haiti). The failure ruined his army and destroyed his prestige. The Emperor fled to Jamaica ; but all endeavours to recover his power and to re-establish Caesarism were futile. The imperial régime, though unfriendly to Protestantism and in some districts actively persecuting, did not prove so injurious as might have been anticipated. In Cape Haitien attempts were made to rob the Methodists of the ground they had formerly possessed and to prevent them rebuilding ; but legal proof of their claim was at length admitted, and Hartwell's diligent ministry and prudent and firm conduct of affairs won their due reward. In Port au Prince the popularity of Mark Bird shielded him from various hostile movements of the priests. His native colleague Heureaux was indeed pressed for the army one Sunday morning on leaving the Methodist church, along with nine or ten other Methodist young men ; and in 1851 a memorial was in consequence addressed to the Haitian Secretary of State on the question of religious liberty, which took favourable effect. Heureaux was speedily released as being a recognized Minister of religion. Bird discerned the hand of ' European inquisitorial bigotry behind the scenes ' in the manoeuvre. In denouncing Romanist aims and methods upon this occasion, Bird reproached the Government for its neglect of Christian education, contrasting its slackness in the free scope it allowed to heathenish vice. This period was marked by a shocking revival in Haiti of West African Obeahism, attended (it was

said) with cannibal orgies. For all this, the Missionary reports that 'about this time every Wesleyan Church in the Republic, as well as other kindred Churches, was in a state of remarkable prosperity; for, as it often happens in such cases, the course pursued by the Government drew both the attention and sympathy of the nation more than ever to Protestantism.' The completion of the Methodist chapel in course of building at Jérémie was indeed delayed for several months by Government orders; but the popular resentment against this action rose to such a height that the order was cancelled, the erection was completed, and the chapel opened in August, 1851. In 1852 the District reached a membership of 452, its high-water mark for a long time to come. Nearly half of these belonged to the Port au Plaat Circuit, including Samana, now for some years under William Towler's excellent management.

Soulouque's ill-starred attack on Santo Domingo arrested Methodist work in Eastern Haiti, which for the time was transferred to the Bahamas District in 1853. Towler was struck down by fatal sickness. This was a most lamentable loss to the cause of religion. The Haiti District was now reduced to a membership of 241. Only two English Missionaries remained on the ground—Mark Bird and Charles Bishop. Hartwell was removed, first to the Bahamas and later to Antigua. St. Denis Bauduy and a couple of other Native Assistants stood by their side. Five Circuits remained in French Haiti, viz. Port au Prince, Jérémie, Les Cayes, Cape Haitien, and Gonaives.

Bird and his companions toiled on through the fifties under many checks and disappointments. In 1854 he writes: 'The whole year has been crowded with painful and distressing trials at Port au Prince.' Next year: 'At Gonaives, where faith and patience have been tried to the utmost, we are at last cheered with some faint symptoms of good.' The worst of Bird's vexations were due to the head master of the Port au Prince School supplied from England, who proved both in character and administration a grievous failure. This was the time of diminished income and retrenchment in all directions for the Missionary Society at home; the lack of means was felt most sorely in Haiti, where Bird was desperately struggling to improve and extend the Mission Schools. He had won sympathy and help to a surprising degree from the Haitian



public, so that after raising the new school premises in the capital he was able to furnish a hostel for boy boarders ; he was determined to make similar provision for girls. No subsidy for such purposes being obtainable from Bishopsgate, he determined to appeal to the Methodists of the United States, while soliciting aid from private friends in England. Fees were now charged upon the day scholars at Port au Prince ; through this resource, supplemented by public subscriptions in the city, the Day School became nearly self-supporting, although Municipal and Government grants were cut off. More and more Bird saw that the agency of High Schools was indispensable to the planting of a self-propagating Church of God in the island. In 1859 he obtained permission to visit the States in this interest. After a lecturing tour of three months there, in July he sailed for Europe on the same errand. He sought to enlist French as well as English sympathy for his clients, and left no stone unturned in his resolute and indefatigable campaign ; but in all he collected only £100. The time of his appeal was unfortunate ; the religious public was preoccupied with other objects, and the Haitian Blacks had not won for themselves a good name. The Republic had produced no second Toussaint l'Ouverture—no hero or statesman of such character as to assure his country's future. The story of the Haitian Republic, now covering half a century, appeared little else than a succession of bloody and ignoble tragedies. Bird found it difficult to awaken interest in his constituents and to communicate his faith in their good qualities and the certainty that the Republic of freed slaves would work its way out of youthful disorders and incapacity to an honourable place amongst civilized communities. The proceedings of the late Emperor Faustin, with his negro Court and his aping of European military fashions, wore in the eyes of foreigners an air of farce ; it was difficult to take seriously any appeal coming from such a quarter. Bird returned home sadly discomfited ; the projected Girls' Boarding School must perforce be postponed.

By this time the health of Mrs. Bird, who had for twenty years shared her husband's perils and privations, was greatly shaken. Bishop testifies to the extreme frugality in the Port au Prince Mission House, enforced by the needs of the work, from which the mother of the family suffered most of all. It was hoped to secure for her effectual medical aid ; but the hope

was in vain, and Mrs. Bird died in New York toward the end of 1860, martyr to the cause of the Gospel in Haiti.

During the later fifties Samana, in the Puerto Plata Circuit, now transferred to the Bahamas District, was the flourishing corner of Haitian Methodism. The report states :

The Protestant population is increasing ; evil customs are rapidly disappearing ; a highway is making for our God. . . . The moral changes to which I refer are provoking the Romish inhabitants to jealousy in a good sense, and thus giving a better aspect to society.

But the outbreak of revolution overcast this bright prospect. Samana, captured after a six months' siege, was sacked and the people reduced to dire poverty. The Mission premises were, however, respected, and the resident Assistant Missionary, Peter Van der Horst, a man of notable influence, played a useful part in the peace-making. Those able Missionaries Joseph Webster and James Darrell had successively superintended the Port au Plaat Circuit after Towler's death—the latter for several years. The Mission had won the confidence of the people, and ' an effectual door ' was opening in Eastern Haiti for the Gospel word. Two things mainly hindered our progress in that area : (1) the unacquaintance of the Missionaries with Spanish—rarely could they remain long enough to become masters of the people's language : and (2) the frequent political changes, in the violence of which Eastern Haiti, with its predominance of Spaniards, showed itself little behind the negro western section. The chronic war between the two States prevented the administration of their territory as a single Methodist District.

The year 1859 was critical in Haitian history. Soulouque's pasteboard empire had collapsed, and liberal ideas prevailed in the Republic restored by President Geffrard. Wesleyan education was once more encouraged at Port au Prince ; unfortunately, the failure and dismissal of the Principal, occurring just then, disabled the High School from taking advantage of the turn of the tide in its favour. In all directions Protestants were able to breathe more freely, and to act with an enterprise impossible for years past. Simultaneously Rome strengthened its hold upon Haiti by the establishment of a Concordat with the Black Republic—the object of its long-continued endeavours. Geffrard consented with a view to ensuring

discipline amongst the Catholic clergy and the more regular and seemly conduct of religious offices; Bird candidly acknowledges the improvement effected in these respects. At the same time the priests became zealous and watchful opponents of 'heresy,' and Popery counted for more of a political force in the island than hitherto. Port au Prince was made the see of a Roman Archbishop, and the Papal hierarchy blossomed out in the Republic. Religious toleration remained the law of the land, but its assertion grew more difficult in practice. The good-humoured laxity characterizing popular feeling toward the Missionaries and their work gave way to a more critical, if not hostile, temper. In Eastern Haiti, too, Darrell marks parallel 'symptoms of the growing influence of the Roman Catholic priests.' Despairing of the Mission without Spanish Preachers gaining a hold of the Native people, he inclines to Hartwell's<sup>1</sup> suggestion that Samana and Puerto Plata be attached to the Turk's Island Circuit, receiving occasional visits from the Missionary there. On this plan, he believes, the needs of the English-speaking negro settlers from the States can be sufficiently met; they have several competent Local Preachers among them. Darrell has himself begun to preach in Spanish, but he is 'forced to the painful conviction that our future efforts' in this direction 'will be of little or no avail, if the Government should remain as it is.' The Spanish Executive of Santo Domingo was at this time more actively hostile than the authorities of the Western Republic had ever shown themselves.

Bird and Bishop in the year 1860 were both persuaded that a new era was commencing for Black Haiti. The former vehemently urged the increase of the English staff; but the Missionary Committee was obdurate in refusal. About the same date Bauduy succeeded Bishop at Cape Haitien. Holding strict, not to say puritanical, views about dress and worldly conformity, he attempted to purge his Church of the wearers of earrings and similar ornaments. By this proceeding he broke up the Cape Haitien Society and gave bitter offence to some of the best friends of Methodism. His brethren in the ministry disapproved, but failed to arrest his action.

The Spanish-speaking schoolmaster at Puerto Plata died, and

<sup>1</sup> J. T. Hartwell, formerly labouring at Cape Haitien and Port au Prince, was now the Turk's Islands Minister.

could not be replaced. He had served Methodism efficiently there for a good many years upon a very scanty salary. Darrell, who regarded his school as the one hope of the Mission amongst the Native people of Port au Plaat, now welcomed his removal to Turk's Island, where he succeeded Hartwell. The opposition of the Chairman of the Bahamas prevented the transference of the Eastern Haitian Circuit, which struggled on against wind and tide in hope of more propitious days.

The discouragements of the Haitian Mission, continued during the sixties, were met by it with irrepressible buoyancy. The London Committee, with its eyes fixed at that time upon Italy and China, had little attention to spare for Haiti, although the Island Synod of 1861 pressed on its notice 'with great earnestness the importance of increasing its agency in this land,' where the present opportunity 'could not be neglected without losing the greatest possible advantages.' Instead of the importuned help being sent in 1864, Charles Bishop, who was rendering invaluable service, was withdrawn, to the consternation of the District. Bird was again left the sole English Missionary Bauduy, who had brought about a catastrophe at Cape Haitien which Bishop with difficulty repaired, shortly afterwards retired from the work. The Mission House cut down ruthlessly, so Bird declared, and below the point of tolerable livelihood, the Native Ministers' stipends; there was but a single Native helper by the Chairman's side. The Church membership (excluding Puerto Plata and Samana) was close upon 300. A fifth Station had been put on the *Minutes* in 1862, and a sixth in 1865—both full of promise, especially the former place (Leogane), a suburb of the capital, where the people had built a chapel, counting on the Minister's appointment. The posts remained unoccupied; in 1865 half the Circuits of the District were vacant. The Mission House policy appears to have been to reduce the staff to Bird himself, assisted by such Native Missionaries as he could find. These agents were expected to carry on a wide itinerancy at a very moderate cost. Bird pointed out that the high prices current in Haiti forbade the economy prescribed, and that the condition of the roads, the jealous hostility of the Roman priests, and the ceaseless home demands of the Mission Schools, stood in the way of the travelling the Secretaries desiderated. Bird laid the greatest stress upon the maintenance of the town Schools;



when these had effected their work and created a new intelligence and a different atmosphere amongst the people, then preaching would have free course.

In Eastern Haiti Van der Horst died, and the Mission was left derelict at Puerto Plata. For many years thereafter the care of this Circuit depended upon a negro Local Preacher living at Samana of the name of Jacob James. Born in the United States, James was a man of humblest origin and entirely self-educated ; but he was a pious, diligent, faithful Methodist, and his attainments in knowledge were very respectable. He had a mighty faith in God and a peculiar power in prayer ; during his ministry he bore a leading part in two memorable and extensive revivals of religion. In course of time James was empowered to dispense the Sacraments, and was recognized as the regular Minister of the Wesleyan Church along the coast ; for thirty years the care of the Circuit rested entirely upon him. He died in 1905, at the age of eighty-three. Few worthier names ever stood on the roll of the Methodist ministry than that of Jacob James.

The restoration of the rule of Spain leading to the suppression of religious liberty in Santo Domingo, the Methodist Missions at Puerto Plata and Samana were officially closed in March, 1863. The members of Society continued to meet in private houses, and Methodism survived the persecution, though under great distress and harassment. The popular revolts were crushed with military brutality ; Church property was pillaged, and much of it destroyed ; our Society was scattered and its members driven into hiding.

In 1865 came another fierce revolution in Western Haiti. Geffrard's Government—the best (in Bird's opinion) Haiti had ever enjoyed—was assailed by a negro General, Salnave, of desperate character, who ravaged the country far and wide from his head quarters at Cape Haitien. The political storm was followed by a fire, causing damages estimated at a million pounds sterling. The revived hopes of peaceful progress and commercial prosperity were laid low.

Bird at this time had two young Haitian Preachers in training for the ministry, whom he was prepared to send to the English Theological Institution, with pledges given for their maintenance ; the Missionary Committee declined to receive them. This bitter disappointment, following on other rebuffs,

drove the old Missionary nigh to despair. He looks now to America as the future hope of Haiti. The Protestant Episcopal Church of the States was exerting itself in the island at this epoch—'picking up the shattered fragments of the Methodist wreck in Haiti' (so Bird puts it). In 1865, though Geffrard abandoned the struggle, the revolt of the truculent Salnave was put down, with the help of a British man-of-war, after many months of ruinous fighting, winding up with a second and still more destructive fire in Port au Prince, from which the Methodist premises were again narrowly saved. Bird's remonstrances against Bishopsgate policy became extremely outspoken. Upon the Secretaries' excusing their failure to help Haiti by the lack of French Preachers, 'Send any God-inspired man of ordinary abilities and intelligence,' he replies; 'we will soon teach him French!' At last he went so far as to exclaim: 'God will not forsake Haiti; but He may have to cast aside the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, to its shame.'

The costly experiment in Spanish rule in Santo Domingo came to an end in less than two years; the Eastern Republic was reconstituted, but governed itself little more successfully than before. Religious toleration was, however, restored, and Methodist public worship and preaching were resumed. There was a surprising reaction in its favour. Jacob James became the instrument of a revival which lasted two years continuously (1868-70), affecting all the Protestant families within reach of Samana.

Disaster now fell at the other end of the island. Hitherto the Mission premises, as by miracle, had escaped the fires desolating Port au Prince. Their day arrived on November 17, 1869, when the city, under bombardment in the civil war, once more suffered conflagration. This time church, school-house, hostel, residences of Missionary and schoolmaster—everything was consumed, and the property built up through thirty years with devoted toil, at the cost of many thousand pounds, was a heap of charred ruins. Bird was just then in England, and contemplated retirement from active work. In the Missionary Committee it was proposed to abandon Haiti; rather than see this, he offered to return and live upon the allowances due to

<sup>1</sup> Bauduy, along with several Methodist colporteurs, accepted ordination in this Church.

him as a supernumerary, if he might have the chance of saving the District. Permission was given him. Before he arrived, the people had set to work rebuilding chapel and schools ; they raised at once £1,000 toward repairing their losses. In the few years of labour that remained to him, Bird saw the Port au Prince establishment restored, with improvements taught by experience. To save house-rent, Bird lodged in the chapel vestry while the building was carried on. Appeal to the Church at home was useless ; the catastrophe confirmed the apprehensions of the Mission House as to the peril of building on the treacherous foundation of Haitian society—Bird must keep together what he could of his luckless flock, and wait for the happier days which seemed farther off than ever ! Meanwhile his failing strength was consumed in the task of reconstruction ; to make a new beginning was beyond him. He struggled on to the end, a pilot bravely weathering his last storm, until, in 1879, Thomas Richard Picot was sent to his help from Western Africa. Then he laid down the burden, retiring to die in Jersey a year later, at the age of seventy-two. So this indomitable soul and single-minded Missionary found his rest. Such a life's labour as his cannot be lost ; the seed Bird and his companions sowed on the soil of Haiti in tears will one day yield its sheaves of rejoicing.

The ill-fortune of the Haiti Mission did not cease with Mark Bird's death. The Missionary Committee had resolved to strengthen the District on the appointment of a new Chairman. Three young men were sent out to occupy the vacant Circuits—John Wesley Herivel and Philip Baker, Channel Islanders by birth ; and Robert Newton Portrey, a son of the home ministry, full of promise, who had qualified by a term of residence in France. The three alike made a hopeful beginning in their work, but were in turn struck down by fatal illness. Herivel's obituary accompanies Bird's in the *Minutes* for 1881 ; the others appeared there two years later.

Henry Bleby, in his capacity as Chairman of the Bahamas District, visited Eastern Haiti about this date, and was greatly touched by the condition of our people there. Much fruit of past labour was evident in the Puerto Plata Circuit. He found Methodism lingering in the city of Santo Domingo, under an intelligent black Leader of the name of Grose, spent with age. The community had come from the United States years ago,

bringing a Methodist Minister of their own, who had been carried off by the cholera. They had built a rough, plain chapel, now falling into ruin through their inability to meet the cost of repairs. They were a humble, patient, well-conducted people, holding the fort of the Gospel under remorseless persecution from the Roman priests; they deserved help if any did. Bleby rallied the Methodist remnant who were left, and encouraged them to repair their chapel roof. He thought it well worth while to maintain our footing in this country.

Picot took up the Haitian work in the spirit of his venerated predecessor; he maintained Bird's testimony against the traditional neglect and distrust of Haiti. Soon after his arrival he writes:

I should like to be able to concentrate all the missionary thoughts of the Committee that they have left for the West Indies, towards Haiti, Cuba, and St. Thomas—but *Haiti first*.

He counts it absurd to withdraw from the West Indies in order to develop Oriental Missions; 'every station here needs development.' A large number of black immigrants from the States had settled in Port au Prince, who arrived as Methodist Episcopalians bringing their own pastor. But he was dead, and they were rapidly exchanging English for French speech, and inclining to our worship and communion. We must be ready to provide for them. The rebuilding of the Day School consumed in the recent fire is a clamant necessity. As in the early days, the chapel has been commandeered for its use—an 'unpardonable sacrilege' in Haitian eyes. At Gonaïves the door is again open to Methodism. For a dozen years this old Circuit centre had been abandoned, and a friendly Anglican clergyman had utilized the Methodist chapel. Now he has removed, and we are importuned to return. There is a general demand for the restarting of the Methodist Day School in Gonaïves. Herivel's post was occupied by Portrey, only to be emptied once more by death. The need there is crying, and the opportunity immeasurable; a couple of Ministers are required. Methodism has been continually thrown back in Haiti through the systematic undermanning of the District. Picot reports that the Secretary of State for Public Worship has taken the unprecedented step of circularizing all Ministers, Protestant and Catholic alike, requesting a report of their progress and



requirements. This surely forebodes *assistance*, and equal treatment. 'It is universally believed that an effort will be made to break the Concordat as soon as the Chambers sit. . . . Haitians now *want the Gospel*; they are sick of Roman intolerance.'

In 1881 Western Haiti was scourged by a combination of diseases, beginning with small-pox and continuing with dysentery, yellow fever, typhoid, &c. Whole families were swept off; the sick could not be nursed, nor even the dead buried. The Methodist Synod was perforce omitted for the year. At Cape Haitien the entire surviving community was left pock-marked. The unheard-of virulence of the epidemic testified to the gross carelessness and mismanagement of the Haitians in sanitary matters. The Picot family were almost alone in their immunity. This visitation of death left its mark for long on every public interest in the island; the death of the three young English Ministers newly arrived was a crushing blow to the Methodist cause.

Jacmel and Cayes, as well as Gonaives and Cape Haitien were crying out loudly, and with just claims, for a Methodist Minister. At Cayes the lay evangelist had taken to drink and brought disgrace upon our people; at Cape Haitien the schoolmaster and the English Local Preacher had quarrelled, with deplorable results. Picot could not be everywhere at once; without competent and trustworthy colleagues at the important Stations he was helpless, and Methodist work was at the mercy of fatal moral accidents. Cape Haitien was the vilest place on earth; no unmarried man's reputation was safe who resided there; to make such an appointment would be 'an act of cruelty.' The Circuit Steward, a Scotchman named Mackenzie, was gratefully noted as keeping things together in the Cape Haitien Society through the long period of bereavement and desertion.

The West Indian coloured Minister, Quinlan, was at this time helping in Haiti. Attending the 1882 Synod in Port au Prince, he was astonished at the numbers and vigour of the Methodists in evidence there, after the Society's recent decimation, particularly at the Class attendance compared with that known in former days. At the same time Picot reports the financial position as desperate. The capital is seething with revolution; Government is insolvent; for some time the schools, which cannot live on their fees, have received no grants. Missionary

work is almost impossible outside of Port au Prince, in the disorderly state of the country. 'The devil has set his foot on Haiti. . . . Our faith is being tried; but by God's grace we must conquer! The two other Churches (African Methodist and Anglican) are torn even more than ours.'

In September, 1883, political troubles culminated with the siege and sack of the capital. 'Hell was let loose,' says Picot; 'all our own people who had a little property have been ruined, except two.' The Missionary's house is full of refugees, whom he is bound to protect; and he has the Mission property to guard to the best of his power. Otherwise he would remove his family from the city, where his work is completely arrested for the present. How long the struggle may last no one can predict. He proposes to hold the Synod in safety at Turk's Island. The school-teachers are paid up (on borrowed money) till the end of September, but will continue their work gratuitously, as far as practicable. Circuit receipts are reduced to next to nothing. 'I really do not know what will become of Haiti after this. . . . This war,' he goes on to say, 'is a war of colour—black *versus* mulatto—and is one of extermination. Of all the merchants in Port au Prince only two were black. Hence Government ordered the whole of the commercial part of the city to be destroyed.'

Peace came to the Western Republic sooner than was expected. The Methodists rallied round the Mission; the congregations in Port au Prince were good, and the public confidence in Methodism was unshaken. Picot's steady courage in the late troubles and his wise policy doubtless had much to do with this result. It was resolved to continue the Mission, in hope that the worst of the civil strife was past. In 1883 the *Minutes of Conference* showed a long list of Haitian Circuits—more than doubled since Bird's time; the East Haiti Stations—Santo Domingo City, Puerto Plata, Samana—had been given back to Haiti, along with Turk's Island. To these a fifth was added, on Spanish territory, viz. 'Monte Christo and Fort Liberty,' situated on the north coast, near the western border of the Santo Domingo State, where a number of negro labourers from Turk's Islands were employed. Here the Mission had posted an Evangelist. At Gonaives (in the west) a similar appointment was made, as at Samana (Jacob James). Nine

out of the fifteen Circuits are fed on hope, with ' One wanted ' or ' One to be sent ' for their Minister. Never in our Missionary history had any District been mocked in this fashion to the extent of luckless Haiti. Its Church membership, under the re-enlarged conditions, was 930 ; of these 243 belonged to the Samana Circuit, which had the excellent Jacob James for its (but half recognized) Minister. Turk's Island supplied about a third of the District membership ; Spanish Haiti generally, with recent additions, contributed another third, consisting chiefly of immigrant negro colonists from the United States ; rather less than a third belonged to the French Haitian section. The multiplication of Circuits appeared to signify the adoption of a new policy of enterprise by the Missionary Society—an endeavour to enter open doors and to grasp proffered opportunities. But the advance remained a scheme upon paper until the fifteen proposed Stations should be actually manned.

The Methodist cause was just now in particular favour in Spanish Haiti, where it was noted that the President of the State, and many of its leading men both in government and commerce, had been trained in the missionary Towler's School ; Protestant teaching bred the best citizens. The question of transferring this section of the work to American Methodist care was raised, and favourably considered by American authorities ; but it was found that the people, though American born, were attached to the Wesleyan Church and preferred its fellowship, provided it would not neglect them and treat them as a troublesome burden.

John B. Gedye was the Missionary in charge of Turk's Islands at this juncture. He interested himself much in Spanish Haitian needs, and in the relations of the Haiti District to the West Indian Conference in process of formation, visiting the eastern Circuits of the island and writing to Bishopsgate on their behalf. It was a new grievance to long-suffering Haiti that she should be handed over to the Western (Jamaica) West Indian Conference, which had neither attention nor resources to spare for foreign necessities. Of all the Districts of the province Haiti had the strictest missionary claims on all accounts except those of neighbourhood and race ; this island ought to have been reserved, along with Honduras, for the care of the parent Society. That the Bahamas—perhaps the most

advanced in Methodist Church development of the West Indian groups—should be exempted from the new constitution, while Haiti, the most in need of guidance and parental care, was forced into the path of self-maintenance, was a paradox which did not commend the demands of the changed order. The Missionary Society recognized in the grants accompanying the transference the special claims of Haiti ; but it would have been more generous to retain this nursling under the parental wing ; the oversight of Jamaica was not either desired or specifically suitable. No pecuniary *solatium* could compensate for the severance of the direct connexion with England and the British Conference.

It must be admitted that George Sargeant, the head of the new régime, took a warm interest in the Haiti Mission, and was ready to further its advancement. He appeals to the Missionary Committee for new men, ' the best possible,' for this great and deserving District.

We have [he writes] in Haiti and Santo Domingo a field of labour equal to the whole British West Indies. . . . Never was the country more open to us. . . . Again and again have we occupied important towns, built chapels, opened schools, secured Mission Houses ; and then, when a man has fallen at his post . . . we have sent no successor, and the expense and labour of years have been lost. . . . The General [W.I.] Conference must bend all its energy upon the conversion of Haiti.

Meantime Sargeant hopes the London Committee will at least continue its previous bounty to Haiti. He puts his finger on the cause of the Society's comparative failure—the absence of a well-considered and resolutely pursued policy for the District. The work has been at the mercy of casualties bound to be numerous and sudden in a country under the conditions, climatic and political, here prevailing. The Missionary Society seems never to have counted the cost of attempting the conversion of Haiti, and is nonplussed by each new surprise of calamity. George Sargeant had a grasp of the situation, and realized the present opportunity ; but other West Indian cares engrossed him. The Mission House went into a thorough examination of the financial position, along with Picot ; but it failed to rise to the necessities virtually admitted by the scheme of Haitian Stations now printed for some time in the *Yearly Report* and the *Minutes of Conference*.



Picot had at last a qualified English colleague furnished him in Westmore S. Smith, who arrived at Cape Haitien in 1885. The Circuit had been derelict since Portrey's death five years before. The new-comer found the Preacher's house uninhabitable ; the premises still bore the marks of the earthquake of 1842. A fresh earthquake dislodged him from his temporary domicile in 1887 ; he was obliged to make demands for pecuniary help on the Committee, which they were reluctant to meet. He 'is quite sure that

if we can only erect a good-sized building and establish the School for Girls, we shall succeed. We have the confidence of all classes, and the needs for a really good school are very great. . . . What am I to do [he asks] with a grant of £150, out of which house-rent of £7 a month has to be paid and my own stipend drawn ?'

Moreover, the official connexion with Jamaica swells his travelling expenses enormously ; quarantine regulations compelled him to go round by way of New York to reach the adjoining island ! The Presidential election of 1888 was attended with murderous fighting and with ruinous fires at Port au Prince and Cape Haitien, which took part in the struggle. Westmore Smith was driven away from the latter town for several months, but the Church prospered notwithstanding ; encouraging reports came home of the popularity of the schools and of accessions to the Society. A third English Minister was sent for French Haiti, and stationed at Cayes ; as he failed to master the French tongue, Picot found work for him amongst English-speaking Negroes in Port au Prince.

The east of the island was in civil confusion along with the west. From Puerto Plata Quinlan writes : ' The country is in active eruption ; the people have risen up against despotism and corruption.' In its misery Haiti grows sensible everywhere that its national salvation lies in the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Places are opening to receive the Gospel, and people are calling for pastors and teachers as they never did before. Our opportunities were never so bright as they are to-day.

Yet the Haitian Preachers find, when they get to Conference in January, 1892, £200 out of the normal £700 cut away from their grant at a stroke, and are threatened with a further reduction at the rate of £100 *per annum* !

No wonder that remonstrances took the tone of despair. Picot declares that 'Haiti can expect nothing from bankrupt Jamaica.' 'We are spreading every inch of canvas,' and the present policy of the Committee, says Westmore Smith, is 'cutting our ropes and ripping our sails!' The Haiti Synod forwarded a resolution to Bishopsgate protesting against its being tied to Jamaica, and begging to be restored to the care of the British Conference. But the appeal was in vain. An excellent pastor had been found for Jérémie in a French Local Preacher brought across from Pennsylvania at the cost of the local Church. Smith sent a full account of the incident and of 'the romantic work' achieved in this town, with which Methodism had been so long associated. He is grieved that his report is ignored at home; had such a story 'come from India or China,' with what different eyes would it have been read! It was too true that West Indian, and particularly Haitian, missionary doings were at a discount at head quarters and on the missionary platform in England. Like Bird twenty years before, Picot and Smith turned to the United States for the helpers which England 'steadily fails' to find for them. From that quarter some valuable recruits were enlisted, both teachers and evangelists.

Bird's long-cherished project of a superior Boarding School for Girls was revived in the nineties. April, 1893, saw the Ecole Supérieure launched at Port au Prince, its establishment (under the name of 'Bird College') being greeted with no little applause and sympathy by the Haitian public. Haitian enterprises were apt to make a fair beginning; this was the country of 'the morning cloud and the early dew,' which often belied its eager promises. 'The Lord has sent us,' Westmore Smith writes, 'two splendid teachers and devoted Missionaries'; this good fortune ensured a prosperous start. The venture proved more enduring than some similar projects. A few years later its promoter reports: 'Bird College is proving to be a success in every sense of the term.' It was the first Protestant Girls' High School set up in Haiti.

The Mission House relented in its purpose to reduce its annual grant to the District<sup>1</sup>; nor did Haiti suffer from identification

<sup>1</sup> It was one amongst other unfortunate results of lumping together the West Indian Districts that islands like Haiti and Trinidad, where Methodism was a Mission in the initial stage battling with a dominant Romanism, were treated upon terms devised for adult colonial British Churches.

with the debt-swamped Jamaica so much as was feared. The Haitian Methodists were no niggardly folk ; when times were propitious and a brief spell of peace enabled them to acquire any store of wealth, they contributed generously to their religious institutions, and showed themselves grateful to the Church which had laboured for their salvation. In 1894 Cape Haitien was at last furnished with a chapel of which we need not be ashamed. The new house of God, seating 320 worshippers, was filled on its opening ; the old building made a Day School for 200 children. Costing \$7,400 to build, and receiving a Government grant of \$2,500, only \$300 of debt were left. (Picot and Westmore Smith had now changed places at the two capitals.) The whole year (1894) was one of unusual blessing throughout the District. By way of contrast to Jamaica, Picot declares that 'our whole debts, on trusts and everything, do not amount to over £100, although we have at least £10,000 worth of Methodist property.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1896 clouds gathered again on the horizon. A sentence or two from the Chairman's letter indicates the chronic troubles of the Mission, and reveals the causes which made the Mission House, after long experience, shy of trusting the sometimes radiant promises of Haiti. Picot sums up the year as

a chapter of incidents most depressing to one's spirits, and very unfavourable to progress in the Mission. Government became unpopular, and people showed their discontent in the usual way—incendiarism. All August we had to sleep with one eye open in Port au Prince ; in October three-fourths of Jacmel were destroyed. Business is at a standstill. In November came yellow fever.

This was a typical specimen of Haitian history ; one marvels at the endurance and the hopefulness of men who held to their work and still counted on the coming of God's kingdom when, through seventy years, times without number the spiritual harvest suffered a sudden blight.

The list of Stations in 1897 presents much the appearance the island had assumed at the beginning of Picot's chairmanship and after the absorption of Haiti into the West Indian Conference. The number of Circuits is, however, reduced to a practicable limit (from 15 to 10), only one of which (Gonaives) is put off with 'One to be sent.' Santo Domingo and Petit

<sup>1</sup> Probably these figures relate to Port au Prince alone ; but they intimate the sound business footing on which our premises were placed in Haiti.

Goave are manned each by 'an Evangelist'; a second appointment is made under the same designation for Cape Haiti (hitherto Cape Haitien), to which Monte Christo has been annexed, and for Les Cayes. Auguste Albert figures as Superintendent at the latter place, and at Jérémie Henri Belloncle, whose French names betray their origin. Jacob James is now a supernumerary at 'Samana and Sanches'; to his extended work two English Missionaries have succeeded—Elijah Mair, who had been in the District for some ten years, and W. Emerson Mears, a younger man taken into service by the West Indian Conference, who proved, along with his wife, to have a special drawing to and aptitude for the Spanish service, and whose devoted work has been greatly blessed up to the present time. Hilton C. Quinlan, the negro Preacher who for some years served usefully in Haiti, returned to Jamaica. Altogether the Mission was now well staffed in comparison with former times; its Church membership has grown with the wider area over which it had spread. But it still falls short of four figures, and nowhere has it attained the dimensions of a mass movement.

Since the framing of the Concordat and the introduction of the regular hierarchy, the Roman priesthood had become bitter and active in hostility, determined to root Methodism out of the island, where evangelical influence was never before so pervasive. The Missionaries felt that the crisis of their work had come; they must either be more adequately supported or should take steps to withdraw. If the Missionary Society thought its work worth doing in Haiti, it must make up its mind to do it well. In this sense Westmore Smith writes in 1897:

I ask the Committee . . . what is its intention in regard to Haiti? Have they really decided to give it up? Do they really intend to go on reducing the grant by £50 per annum? If that be the case, I see plainly that we must set our house in order and retire as quietly as possible, leaving our enemies to rejoice in our downfall. . . . The position it has taken all these years to gain will have to be abandoned. I cannot believe that with the knowledge of the facts before it the Committee will make such a mistake. . . . I am sure our British Methodist people would deplore our withdrawal from the field. Four hundred pounds (the present grant) is a small enough sum for our work here. When I came out nine years ago it was £600; and then we had fewer men. . . . Some of us are not without hope that some day not far distant Haiti may return to the care and control of the Mission House.



No reply coming to this letter for many months, Smith asks leave to return home, 'as it is useless to fight against overwhelming odds.' He positively cannot live on the remnant of the missionary allowances remaining after the West Indian Conference assessments have been paid. The Government, which is almost bankrupt, has reduced its School grants nigh to vanishing point; he has been compelled to reduce teachers' salaries and the number of his staff, although scholars multiply and Bird College in particular has eighty-three pupils on its books. The position is financially untenable. Smith laboured four years longer in Haiti, retiring to England finally in 1901, after seventeen years of patient, skilful, genial, and manifoldly fruitful labour in this most exacting field.

The Mission House could not bring itself to separate the Haiti problem from that of the West Indies at large, and the District was left to struggle on in its chronic embarrassments and disappointments with occasional hand-to-mouth measures of relief. The suspension of the West Indian Conferences and the resumption of British control in 1904 met the oft-expressed desire of the Haitians to see themselves linked again to the mother Methodism, but the reversion to old conditions brought no solution of the old difficulties. The Missionary Committee was occupied with plans of relief for the general situation in the West Indies, to the necessities of which the distress of Haiti appeared incidental. Thomas Picot, though still vigorous in the first decade of the new century, was growing venerable. Possessing independent means, from the year 1909 he ceased to draw a salary from the Mission, and took up his residence in Jamaica, while continuing at the helm of the Haiti District and passing to and fro. His unique influence and familiarity with the country and people made Picot's direction, even at this disadvantage, invaluable. But the arrangement in the nature of things could be only *ad interim*. In 1916 he retired home to Jersey, and was succeeded in the Haitian chair by John Du Feu, a Channel Islands Minister of experience.

The history of Methodism in French Haiti closes, characteristically, with a great calamity. The experience of 1869 was repeated forty years later, when the Methodist premises in Port au Prince were once more swept away by fire, and the Church had to begin its work over again from the ashes. The recklessness, incompetence, and childish indiscipline of the

Haitian black population have made them unfit for a safe and stable city life. Politics since the present century began have become somewhat more settled, both in the Eastern and Western Republics, as the United States has secured a financial hold upon their Government, and in consequence a measure of control over their administration. It may be hoped that this influence will gradually extend in Haitian affairs, and will help to supply, in the better order created and the more stable footing on which life and property come to be placed, a firmer ground for the work of the Gospel and the building up of the Kingdom of God.



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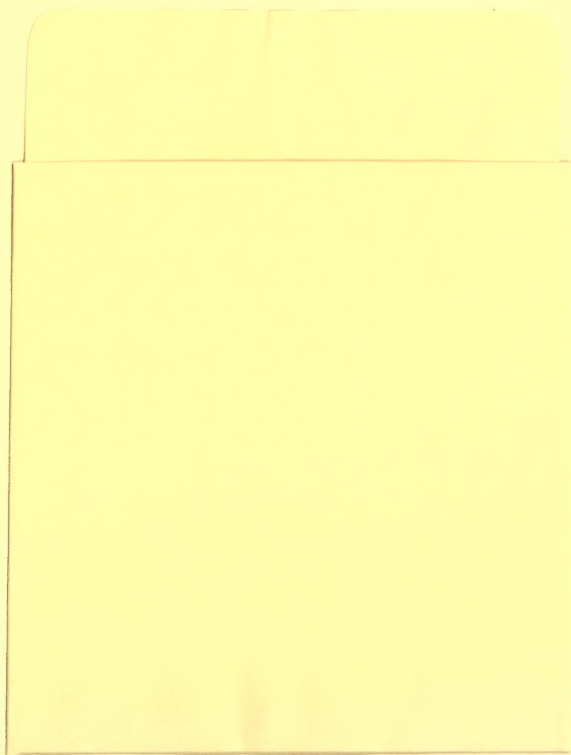












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